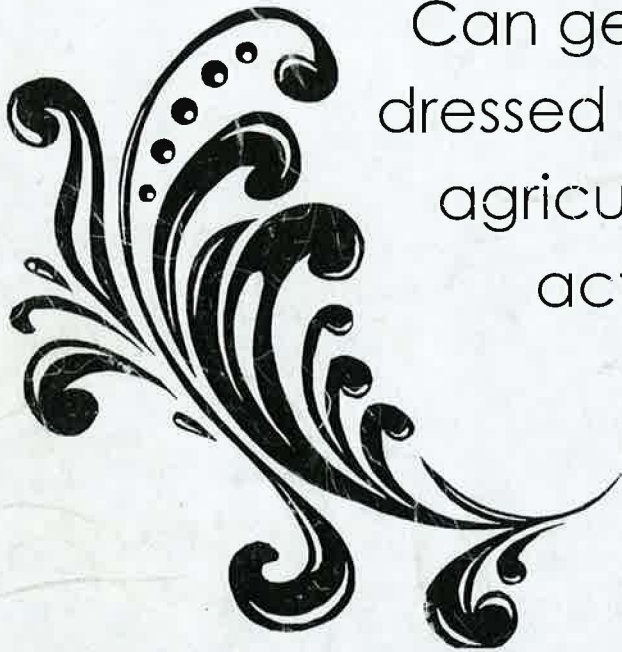


# Buono, Pulito e Giusto:

Can getting  
dressed be an  
agricultural  
act?



## **Buono, pulito e giusto:**

*(Good, clean and fair)*

# **Can getting dressed be an agricultural act?**

Prepared for

the XXV Kellogg Rural Leaders Programme 2009

Kate Scott

Rees Valley Station

Glenorchy

Ph 03 442 9908

Email: [scotts@reesvalley.co.nz](mailto:scotts@reesvalley.co.nz)



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Food production globally has undergone massive change over the last few decades but recently consumers have rediscovered a desire to connect with producers and to be reassured that the food they eat is healthy and comes from a source that conforms to their political, ethical and moral beliefs. The rise of the 'conscious consumer,' the resurgence of Farmers' Markets, environmental and health concerns about modern farming and the fight-back by small producers against the globalisation of food have all contributed to putting concerns about food production methods in the foreground of many global campaigns.

Farming for the production of natural fibres faces many of the same challenges that food producers are confronted by, with the added impediment that wholly synthetic fibre is not just possible but is in fact dominant in the global market. Even highly processed foods have to start from an agricultural source, but textiles can be created entirely artificially, often from petrochemicals.

Natural fibre producers need to pull together to give voice to the consumer benefits of their products, and the environmental and social benefits of natural fibres, and the message needs to be delivered loudest to the same people who are already strongly interested in food production from an ethical viewpoint.

My title uses the motto of Slow Food : 'Good, Clean and Fair' which refers to the good taste of food that people care about, the clean production of foods in an environmentally responsible way and the fair treatment of agricultural workers and producers as well as the consumers. The reference to dressing as an agricultural act is a nod to American rural philosopher Wendell Berry's famous statement that "Eating is an agricultural act" – a belief that anybody who eats food should understand where it comes from.

*The personal is political!*

## **CONTENTS**

Introduction	p. 4
Slow Food	p. 7
Community Supported Agriculture	p.15
Farmers' Markets	p.17
Michael Pollan, Eric Schlosser and Alice Waters	p.19
Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall	p.23
Fibre Naturali – Natural Fibres at Terra Madre 2008	p.26
International Year of Natural Fibres 2009	p.29
LOHAS	p.32
Eco-Fashion	p.34
Zque and the NZ Merino story	p.37
Conclusions	p.40
Bibliography	p.47
Appendix 1 : Slow Food Manifesto	p.52
Appendix 2 : Natural Fibres Manifesto	p.53
Appendix 3 : IYNF Natural Fibres list	p. 54
Appendix 4 : Zque brochure	p.55

## **Introduction**

The Slow Food movement, originally begun in Italy, but now a global phenomenon with 'convivia' in over 100 countries and 84,000 members, is one of the best examples of how attitudes to food consumption have changed. In the first part of my project I aim to background Slow Food and its ideals, partly because of my experiences in Italy last year at the Terra Madre event organised by Slow Food, and also because of the broad appeal to a wide range of people that their philosophies hold. The rise in public interest in food production is something I find personally fascinating, as I believe it is intrinsically linked with slowing the spread of the rural – urban divide that we talked about so much back in January at the start of the Kellogg course. Then I want to move to a more brief exploration of related initiatives – Farmer's Markets, Community Supported Agriculture and also the rise of celebrity chefs who highlight the provenance of the food they cook. These are people with millions of fans and viewers who are drawing consumer's attention to how food is produced and encouraging them to make value judgements about it.

In the second part of my project I aim to explore what convergences there could be between food and fibre in this new climate of consumer interest in what constitutes sustainable primary production. Farming for fibre is an ancient human tradition, being intrinsically linked with the development of civilisations just as food production is. Ironically, it was the fibre industry that brought about the earliest incarnations of the Industrial Revolution, with the invention of mechanised cotton manufacturing in the eighteenth century.

However, as the following graphs show, textile manufacturing has morphed into a whole new beast with the invention of synthetic and artificial fibres and has now squeezed natural fibre production to a shadow of its former self. The graph below shows world fibre production from 1900 to 2007 and illustrates how manmade fibres have had a major impact on cotton and wool's market share. The second graph shows textile consumption in tonnes since 1950 against world population growth, and shows the strong growth and dominance of synthetics while natural fibres have struggled to keep pace. These graphs were used at the Natural Fibres Workshop at Terra Madre 2008 and come from data supplied by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations).



### La produzione mondiale di cotone, lana e fibre chimiche, 1900-2007

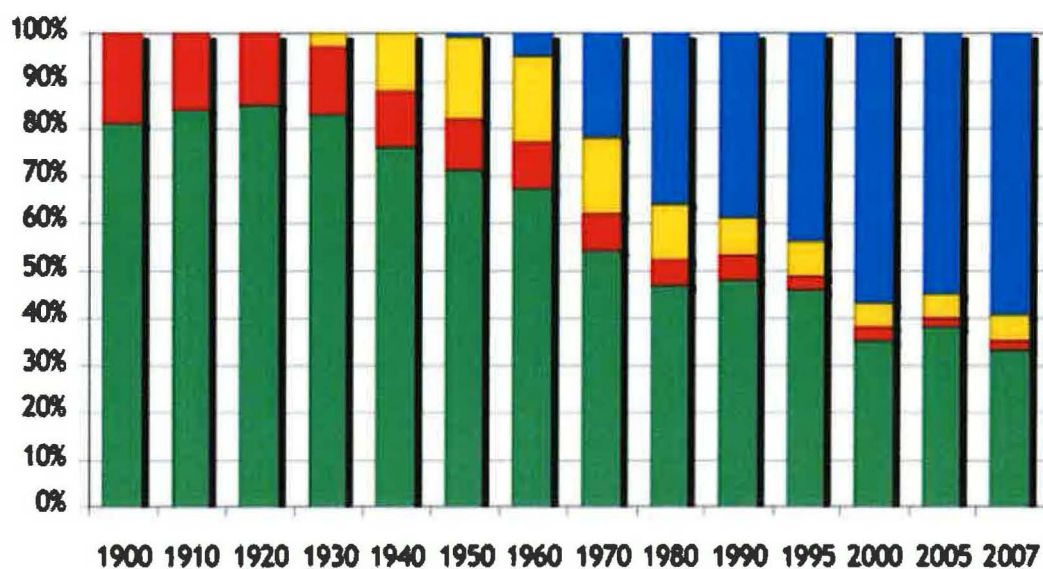
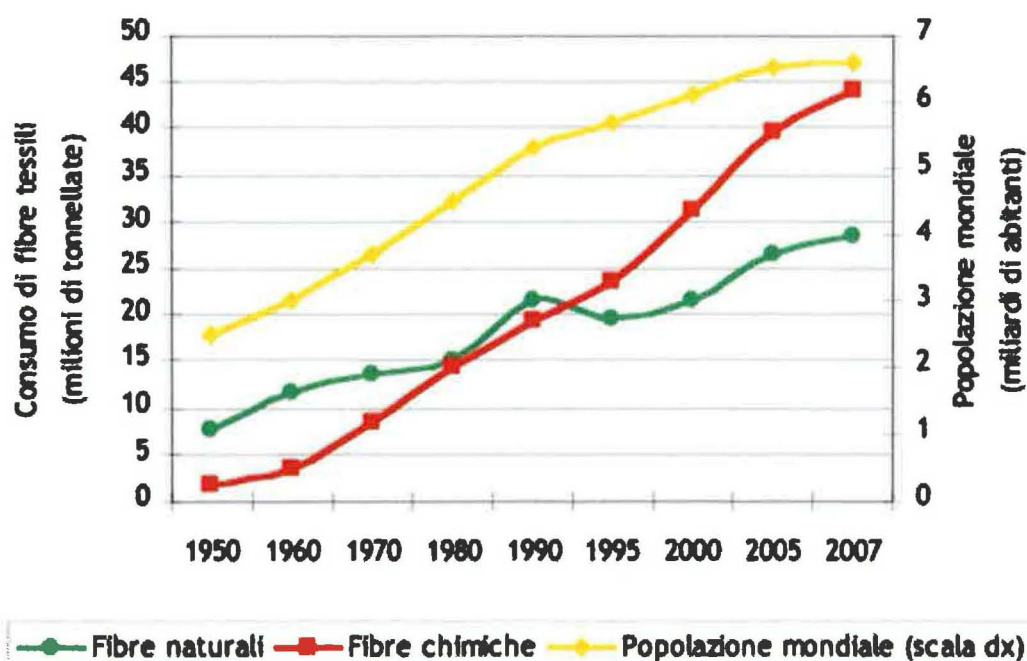


Figure 1

### La crescita della popolazione mondiale e il consumo di fibre tessili, 1950-2007

Figure 2



These graphs are a strikingly visual representation of the challenges that the 20<sup>th</sup> century has brought to producers of natural fibres.<sup>1</sup> The disconnect between producers and consumers of natural fibres is obvious from the second graph and the rampant growth of synthetics is likewise starkly shown. In these illustrations it is easy to see where the phenomenon of 'fast fashion,' the clothing equivalent of fast food, is drawing much of its raw materials from. These discarded textiles are clogging up landfills all over the western world – in the UK, 30kg of textiles per person are sent to landfills annually, (Wells, 2008) in addition to the millions of kilograms of unwanted clothes being shipped to third world countries every year.

Natural fibres are part of humanity's biggest stories – civilisation, ancient and modern trade routes, industrialisation – but in the century of synthetics, is it possible for natural fibres to retain a place in a modern world which can manufacture alternatives? While food is a fundamental human need, choices about clothing are often seen as less about necessity and more about whim and fashion, devaluing textiles in the eyes of some. The act of getting dressed does not generally have the same life or death quality that eating does, but it is a global industry that employs a billion people (Black, 2008, p. 14) and generates a huge amount of human interest. Fashion designers, sweatshop labour, the water footprint of cotton, the battles of hemp, Pamela Anderson and PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), supermodels and celebrities – all part of the global world of textiles and fibre, with a high public recognition factor, although many consumers may not join the dots.

In 2009, the International Year of Natural Fibres, can we convince consumers of textiles to be 'co-producers' (part of the process of production, not a completely separate and unconnected end consumer) as some food consumers now think of themselves?

---

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Elena Schneider of Slow Food for supplying me with these graphs.

## Slow Food

I have chosen to begin by looking at Slow Food, both because of my personal experiences last year with the organisation, and also because of their strong commitment to bringing the work of producers to the attention of consumers, and attempting to help consumers engage with producers for mutual benefit.

The Slow Food 'movement' began in Italy, a country with food traditions that are recognised all over the world. The founder, Carlo Petrini, was involved in left-wing politics but was also keenly interested in food and wine, and when he encountered a below par meal at a local workers' social club in 1982 he wrote to the local branch of the Arci, the federation of political groups which ran the club. The local president dismissed the complaint by as being essentially frivolous, and a debate in the media followed. Petrini was given to understand that there were more important things for the left-wing politicians of the country to be worried about, and was left with the distinct impression that being concerned about such things was the domain of capitalists, not socialists. However, the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s had introduced the idea of the personal being political, and Petrini strongly believed that being able to enjoy food and wine, as well as art, culture and leisure, was a democratic right for everyone. Being able to take pleasure in life was not just for the elite or rich hedonists (Andrews, 2008, pp. 7-9).

Slow Food became an official movement in 1989, following a protest in 1986 in Rome when a McDonald's restaurant was proposed near the Spanish Steps, a great icon of Roman history and culture (Andrews, 2008, p. 11). Fast food was seen as the antithesis of the ideas that were being formulated by the group, so when delegates met at the end of 1989 in Paris the name Slow Food was taken up and the snail logo (Figure 3) was introduced (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 19) (Petrini, 2001, p. 8). This meeting resulted in the Slow Food Manifesto being ratified and published (see Appendix 1) and international ambitions were already apparent in the choice of the English language for the name.

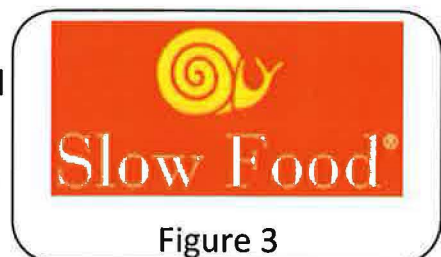


Figure 3

Slow Food describes itself now as an 'eco-gastronomic' movement.

Slow Food is a non-profit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization that was founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices

affect the rest of the world.

To do that, Slow Food brings together pleasure and responsibility, and makes them inseparable.

Today, we have over **100,000** members in **132** countries.

(Slow Food, 2009)

Eco-gastronomy indicates the strong direction given by Slow Food to consumers to think about where food comes from and how its production affects the environment, including the social dimensions of that environment. The industrialisation of agriculture has sparked much debate from many angles, but Slow Food has a take on the issue that is broader than many basic 'green' criticisms.

The trend toward industrialization of agriculture threatens traditional cultural links between consumers and their dinner plates by increasing the physical and social distance between producer and consumer of food... The speciality products of a nation are... associated with the geology, soil, culture or some intangible attribute of the local geography... According to Slow Food principles, the production and consumption of food involves choices that have significant consequences for individuals, communities, and the environment

(Pietrykowski, 2008, pp. 36-37).

This summary of Slow Food's position on food production encompasses a wide range of issues, and demonstrates the unusually broad appeal that the movement has. "It seemed to have the ear of restaurateurs, farmers and policy makers, while retaining a radical and principled position sufficient to capture the imagination of anti-global activists and environmentalists" writes Andrews in his Preface.

The emphasis placed on culinary cultural traditions is due in part to the development of Slow Food in Italy, a place with a strong and distinctive food history. The concerns voiced by the members that regional specialties, whether cattle breeds, vegetable species or particular dishes, were being subsumed by a global homogenisation of food types has parallels all over the globe though, and the spread of Slow Food movement to 132 countries demonstrates that plenty of other cultures and food communities have similar concerns. "Slow Food has attempted to articulate a politics rooted in local identity, traditions and cultures," writes Andrews (p. 129). Food for many is a source of identity, but increasing globalism has eroded that identity by chipping away at traditional artisanal skills related to a particular place's resources, and rural-urban migration (in both directions) adds to the effect by



displacing rural holders of traditional knowledge to the cities and replacing them with urban commuters who are often not connected in any way to the land around them. Ecological and environmental concerns are a good fit for this focus on the local, and Slow Food's preference for the small, hands-on producer. "The transformation of Slow Food from a gastronomic to an eco-gastronomic movement has created an unusual conjunction of interest in quality food and produce with a political focus on the deleterious effects of globalization" write Parkins & Craig (p. 20) but they go on to quote Petrini distancing himself from anti-globalisation protestors " 'Others may take the fight to the streets; Slow Food has a different idea: to rescue eating establishments, dishes and products from the flood of standardization'" (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 20). It is Italy's *osterie* and *trattorie* that Slow Food fought to defend from the forces of global capitalism – local neighbourhood eateries run by families, the kinds of places where local specialties often feature, and the sort of establishment most threatened by the expansion of globalised fast food outlets (ibid).

Now that Slow Food has gone global it has expanded its horizons considerably. Issues around food traditions are not unique to Italy, or even to the Western world. The creation of the 'Ark of Taste' in 1996 established a database of "rare, endangered or unique products from around the world, as a response to... the increasing homogenization of food and flavours, and an alarming decline in global biodiversity" (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 23). The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity was set up in 2002, and its main function is to help set up and support 'Presidia,' small projects to help artisan producers identified from the Ark of Taste: "Presidia projects constitute inventive ways in which Slow Food can articulate the distinctive cultural value of products, together with the importance of recognizing the social capital in the form of producers and communities in which these products are embedded" (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 24). An example is the jam production of an area of Romania which lost a huge proportion of its population after the end of communism. With little recollection of how small, private business functions and major barriers in the form of EU regulations, producers of wild fruit jams were unable to tap into the potential economic benefits of their produce until Slow Food became involved, gave the product Presidia status, and helped co-ordinate education that gave the growers the appropriate EU food safety certification (Andrews, 2008, pp. 95-97). Pietrykowski touches on this issue too, referring



to the compliance burdens that small producers face when regulations are designed with large producers in mind. As he notes though, opposing regulation has the potential to introduce added risk for the consumer. Slow Food addresses this by promoting a social contact between producers and consumers, “establish[ing] a connection between buying food and understanding the conditions under which it was made.” (Pietrykowski, 2008, p. 42) From its beginnings as a gastronomic movement dedicated to legitimising the idea of taking pleasure in eating and drinking, rather than pleasure in eating being seen as some kind of bourgeois hedonistic rarity for the rich only, Slow Food has come to focus strongly on producers of food and how the end consumers of food products can help those producers to stay in business.

Perhaps the most spectacular manifestation of this ideal has been Terra Madre (see Andrews, pp. 48-64). The first Terra Madre was held in Turin, Italy, in 2004. Nearly 5,000 delegates from 120 countries attended, representing 1,200 ‘food communities.’ Many delegates came from the developing world, and they returned home from Terra Madre to set up Slow Food convivia (a local Slow Food group is known as a ‘convivium,’ from the same word root as ‘convivial’) in their own regions, including Africa, Asia and South America. In the first Terra Madre in 2004 the emphasis was strongly on producers and recognising their work; the second in 2006 set out to bring together producers, chefs and academics in an attempt to build networks. The lead-up to the 2006 event also saw the launch of the “Good, Clean and Fair” slogan of Slow Food, and Petrini’s opening speech referred to the failures of globalisation, the environmental effects of industrialisation of agriculture and the destructive effects of the same on local traditions. Other speakers included a leader from Mali who spoke of the effects of war and famine on farming communities there, and the use of food as a weapon; a Slow Food convivium head from Lebanon trying to set up a farmer’s market in Beirut where land mines were a major consideration, and a Belarusian who thanked Slow Food for helping revive traditional crops that had almost been forgotten in his country. Terra Madre takes place at the same time, and in close proximity to, the ‘Salone del Gusto’ – a kind of giant food fair with many Presidia products featured. Thousands of people visit the Salone del Gusto (150,000 in 2006), and holding it concurrently with Terra Madre reinforces the Slow Food ideal of connecting pleasure and responsibility. “Slow Food has attempted to ground itself in the

experiences, culture and traditions of the producers. This gives it a different dimension from many other consumer associations and movements, while also distinguishing it from other anti-global political movements by virtue not only of appealing to and acting in solidarity with producers, but by positioning their work and livelihoods as central to the dynamic of change" (Andrews, 2008, p. 63).

The 2008 Terra Madre, which I attended, further expanded its horizons by including natural fibres and musicians in addition to food producers. Traditional music and fibre farming were positioned as being unique cultural expressions in similar danger of being lost to the homogenising effects of globalisation as food. Terra Madre is a huge event, with many different workshops running simultaneously in an enormous warehouse type building, which sounds chaotic but is in fact well managed with the help of technology. Opening and closing ceremonies are held in the massive Olympic stadium in Turin, media interest is huge and the whole experience was one of slightly mind-boggling proportions. The Salone del Gusto next door is a massive collection of food items, mostly from Europe for practical reasons, but all presented with great passion and conviction by the producers.

Most of the criticism that Slow Food attracts seems to revolve around the charge that the movement is some kind of elitist food-snob club, and that by emphasising taste and quality Slow Food is effectively disdaining the food choices of the majority as inferior. Attention is also drawn to the expense of artisanal food, and Slow Food members derided as being nostalgic and anti-progressive. When charged with haranguing poor people about their lifestyle choices, Slow Food responds that there are serious health and environmental issues at stake, and education is the only way to draw attention to the issues and bring about change (Andrews, 2008, pp. 45-47). Elitism, nostalgia, fetishising of pleasure, paternalism & imperialism (Andrews, 2008, p. 172) are all listed as sins Slow Food is guilty of. A short article in *Time* magazine last year brought together Slow Food and global food shortage concerns, and asked "Who cares about the perfect mushroom when more people are going hungry?" (Walsh, 2008). The response from Slow Food leaders in the US was "How did we get to a place where it is considered elitist to have food that is healthy for you?" (ibid).

Food historian Rachel Laudan wrote a thought-provoking piece in the first issue of the journal *Gastronomica* in which she challenges the assumptions



of “Culinary Luddites,” a grouping in which she includes Slow Food. She paints the support for ‘traditional’ foods as a “moral and political crusade” (Laudan, 2001, p. 36) and goes on to say that although she loves cooking and grew up in a very traditional household churning their own butter and skinning hares, as a historian she is offended by the simplistic presentation of a ‘good,’ sundrenched rural past juxtaposed with a ‘bad,’ grey and industrial present. She writes of the suspicion in which fresh and natural foods were held by generations of human ancestors, and the preference anyone who could afford to choose had for processed and preserved foods, especially when winter or drought seasons brought shortages. Smoked or fermented or cooked foods were preferred: “happiness was not a verdant Garden of Eden abounding in fresh fruits, but a securely locked storehouse jammed with preserved, processed foods” (ibid p.37). She defends the long history of fast food, citing ancient examples from all over the world, and she questions the assumption that because food comes from the country, people who live in the country must have eaten better than urbanites (ibid p. 39). Laudan contends that more often than not, the indentured serfs got what was left after most of the harvest was shipped off to the cities. And she reminds us that food has always been hazardous: “while we fret about pesticides on apples, mercury in tuna, and mad cow disease... bread made from moldy, verminous flour, or adulterated with mash, leaves or bark to make it go further, or contaminated with hemp or poppy seeds to drown out sorrows, meant that for five hundred years Europe’s poor staggered around in a drugged haze subject to hallucinations” (ibid 40). Laudan claims that the doubling of population between 1575 and 1825 (from 500 million to 1 billion) forced poor people to focus on basic staples that cropped well, resulting in a diet of mostly porridge and potatoes for many Europeans. Fortunately, by the 1880s industrialisation of food supply began, with the invention of mechanical reapers and industrial canning, plus the growth of a transport network that could move food around much quicker. Food prices fell dramatically in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (p.41) and widespread famine was averted, despite the booming population growth. Bjorn Lomborg, of *Skeptical Environmentalist* fame, reports that despite massive population growth (particularly in the developing world) the number of malnourished people has actually reduced, and so has the percentage of total world population who are starving

(Lomborg, 2001, pp. 24-25), which surely speaks volumes about some of the successes of modern agriculture.

Laudan's article is a great reminder that many aspects of modern food culture are an advance on the precarious hold on a reliable food supply that previous generations had to contend with. Romanticising the golden past is always risky, as inevitably there are aspects which do not gel with modern sensibilities. However, I am not sure that Slow Food actually does promote returning to times gone by at all, as their focus is strongly on the development of links between producers and consumers and resisting having food choices dictated by big business alone. Theirs is very much a promotion of the 'conscious consumer' ethos which encourages knowledge about production methods and engaging with the process. It seems to me that seizing on the support for food traditions that Slow Food promotes and calling them anti-progressive is a bit of a diversion by critics, and offers a handy way to ignore the more political aspects of the movement, and the emphasis on cultural dimensions to food. Accusing Slow Food members of being Luddites intent on reverting us all to some mythical past misses the point I think. "The new rurality... advocated by Slow Food is not a Year Zero project to make everyone an agricultural worker but, while certainly seeking to revitalize rural environments and communities, is based on an ethical cosmopolitanism, in which people are aware of global connections which bind them to distant others" (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 26). Pietrykowski writes that "Slow Food has been able to take an attribute normally associated with cultural capital – culinary taste – and insert it into a social economy built around the preservation of unique food, local cuisine, and cultural heritage. Cultural capital then comes to encompass more than a signalling device for social status" (p.43).

The twentieth century has brought changes to many aspects of human life and culture, through gigantic technological leaps. It does not seem to me that it ought to surprise anyone that humanity as a whole is slightly uncomfortable with the rate of change when it comes to something as fundamental as food. The whole concept of 'comfort food' which enjoyed a renaissance in recent years embodies the attractiveness of an idea like Slow Food – the kind of food you remember from your youth, that Mum or Granny used to make, that is simple and basic and wholesome, for want of better words. Food that has ingredient lists comprised of numbers and



unpronounceable chemical equations creates suspicion on some very fundamental human level, in a way that other new-fangled things do not. And as the numbers of humans on the planet have grown to the point where we are now noticing the extent to which we impinge on the planet's functioning, it is much more obvious to us that what we do in the environment affects other individuals and societies, not to mention species, and the exponential growth of the communications industry has helped ideas and images spread very rapidly. Slow Food's eco-gastronomy, in bringing together environmental concerns and worries about what we are ingesting with a strong focus on cultural heritage, ticks many boxes for people who bother to think about their impact on the world and the world's impact on them. Culture, food and the environment pretty much sums up the entire human experience, and turning those fundamentals upside down as the last couple of hundred years has done, is bound to unnerve us a bit. It is probably true that 150 years ago more than half the world was starving and undernourished, but that fact shouldn't enable us to feel that whatever the highly prized foods of the time were are now irrelevant and of no cultural significance. We can't all eat organic lentils and vine ripened tomatoes every day, but eaters everywhere can be aware of where food comes from and how it gets to them, and what its impact on their health and the health of the environment is.

Slow Food have developed a strong force for promoting an approach to the difficult balancing act between economic, social (cultural) and environmental forces. As a producer, I am naturally seduced by the strong focus the movement has placed on the role of the producer, and the kudos accorded to producer. Consuming is positioned as the last step in the production process, not a separate and unrelated event. Turning consumers into 'co-producers' heightens the sense of interdependency, bringing together pleasure and responsibility and the possibility of bridging the rural-urban divide. The overarching goal of Slow Food has the potential to bring about significant change to farmers, in the way our work is viewed and understood. Whatever our fears about the emphasis on local foods, or our reservations about organics or our secret fast food cravings, the big messages of Slow Food are very relevant and farmers of all kinds ignore them at their peril.

## **Community Supported Agriculture**

One of the most interesting analogous ideas that shares philosophies with Slow Food is Community Supported Agriculture. The genesis of this approach was also in the revolutionary days of the late 1960s, when German idealists inspired by Rudolf Steiner set up a community land trust and arranged leases to biodynamic farmers (Centre for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Sanata Cruz, 2005). This led on to the establishment of "Agriculturally Cooperating Communities" where non-farming community members support local farmers financially, and Jan Vander Tuin travelled through Germany and Switzerland looking at various manifestations of the general idea. He then brought the idea to the US in 1985 when he travelled to the north-eastern state of Massachusetts and met with communal organic gardeners at Indian Line Farm (McFadden, 2003). A parallel idea (initially unknown to Europeans and Americans) in Japan called 'teikei' ("putting the farmer's face on the food") dates back to 1965, and was generated by food safety scares, such as the mercury poisoning of Minamata Bay, and concerns about imported food and trade imbalances (ibid, p. 4).

Like Slow Food, CSA started out as a radical counter-culture kind of enterprise with somewhat esoteric ideals, but the result has been a very successful and fast-growing movement.

Community Supported Agriculture consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or "share-holders" of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests. By direct sales to community members, who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of much of the burden of marketing.

(USDA, 2009)

Generally, non-farming members of a CSA buy 'shares' akin to membership or subscription and get a box of produce each week during the farming season. The bonuses for farmers include the upfront payment, which



provides working capital, the ability to sell directly to consumers without having to spend a lot of time on marketing, and the opportunity to get to know the people who are eating the produce and learn about their concerns, as well as being able to provide some education. For consumers, the advantages include fresh healthy food, some of which may be unfamiliar to them, and the chance to feel like they are part of food production, not just an adjunct to it (Local Harvest, 2009). People can choose a CSA which conforms to their beliefs – organic heirloom vegetables, or free range eggs or pasture-fed meat etc. And the 'shares' are not just in the produce, but in the risk too: "Many times, the idea of shared risk is part of what creates a sense of community among members, and between members and the farmers. If a hailstorm takes out all the peppers, everyone is disappointed together, and together cheer on the winter squash and broccoli" (ibid). According to some sources, one million families in the United States are using CSA-sourced produce (Simply Good Food CSA Ltd, 2009).

One of the largest CSAs in the US is Angelic Organics in Illinois. This farm feeds 1400 families (Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2009), many of them in Chicago, and the story of the farm is told in the 2005 film *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*. John Peterson's family farm in the Midwest became a haven for his artistic friends in the 1960s, but the farm debt crisis of the 1980s forced the sale of most of the land. CSA eventually helps Farmer John to save the remainder of the land and to buy some of his original farm back. Something of a hippy maverick in his conservative hometown, Peterson was viewed with much suspicion by his neighbours but despite his 'otherness' his farm is now incredibly successful (Siegel, 2005).

In New Zealand CSAs are just beginning to pick up speed. One in the Wellington area, Simply Good Food Ltd, is without links to a specific farm or grower and more of a commercial entity, with a network of suppliers in the lower North Island (Simply Good Food CSA Ltd, 2009). In contrast, a trust has been set up on Waiheke Island, and the trust has secured some land and hired a farmer to work the land and produce vegetables for the members (Waiheke CSA, 2009). These different approaches to the concept of consumers being more closely connected with growers demonstrate the flexibility within the CSA system; it can be quite commercial or much more community-based, depending on the members' needs, requirements or beliefs.

## **Farmers' Markets**

The growth of Farmers' Markets in recent years has been described as a "counter-revolution" (Guthrie, Guthrie, & Lawson, 2006) with its "emphasis is shifting from cheapness and quantity to quality, rarity and esteem for artisan production methods... [a] move from conspicuous consumption to conscious consumption" (ibid, p.1). The counter-revolution tag is a neat way of expressing the political shift that has taken food purchasers more or less back to where they started from earlier in the twentieth century.

It's not all just about environmental concerns and shortening the food chain – the atmosphere of the marketplace plays a big role. "Sure, they're good for the environment. But farmers markets are thriving mainly because consumers are social creatures" (Gowin, 2009). A survey of Farmers' Market shoppers in Canada found that for many people, noble goals about food miles or organics were further down the list of priorities than more immediate benefits such as sociability and ambience. "More subtly, however, industrial farming ruptured the rich web of cultural experiences traditionally tied to food-conviviality, a sense of connection, knowledge of food vendors, trust in the provenance of food, and links to the past. Increasingly, consumers crave the personal touch in food shopping and see Farmers Markets as the way to restore it" (Gowin, 2009, p. 51). Local surveys suggest the same forces are at work here (Guthrie, Guthrie, & Lawson, 2006, p. 9).

Gowin's article also reports that price is no deterrent to customers who are concerned about non-monetary values, and that Farmers' Market customers are not concerned about paying a premium. An article in *North and South* magazine this year about Farmers' Markets in this country lists plenty of produce available at the highly successful Whangarei Growers' Market that is much cheaper than supermarket prices (Courtney, 2009) and Guthrie et al claim the prices at the market are 50% - 75% of supermarket prices for the same item (Guthrie, Guthrie, & Lawson, 2006, p. 5). Independent surveys have found that prices at Farmers' Markets in the UK are 10% - 18% cheaper than supermarkets (Box, 2003). Cutting out the middlemen of the food chain is beneficial to both farmer and consumer, and much of the impetus for producers to join a Farmers' Market comes from feeling squeezed by supermarkets' buying power. "Fifty years ago farmers received 45 – 60 percent of the money shoppers spent on food. Supermarkets' increasing power means that today they receive around 10 percent... this leads to low



morale, if not financial failure, among farmers” (Guthrie, Guthrie, & Lawson, 2006, pp. 2-3).

Farmers’ Markets are perhaps more vulnerable to being captured by hype, despite the potential win-win for producers and consumers. The Farmers’ Market NZ Inc organisation has recently launched an “authentication” programme for its member markets, hoping to certify stallholders and keep markets to an 80% minimum for local produce, but to date this has not met with universal acclaim from growers (Breckon, 2009). Other commentators in Breckon’s article stated that there had been a loss of ‘authenticity’ with some Farmer’s Markets focusing too much on the experience and not enough on selling produce. Robert Bradley of the Whangarei Growers’ Market concurs, telling *North and South* that too many Farmers’ Markets have “got sidetracked into food fashion” rather than focusing on the basics (Courtney, 2009, p. 60).

Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini created tension in 2007 by criticising the iconic Ferry Plaza Farmers’ Market in downtown San Francisco for being overpriced and inauthentic. When furious stallholders challenged him he backed down, citing translation problems, but his comments caused much debate (Lucianovic, 2007). The Ferry Plaza market is the showpiece of the strong Californian foodie scene, but is in some ways a victim of its own success as it is now less a genuine Farmers’ Market, and more a tourist attraction (as are many markets globally). The irony of the Slow Food president calling a wildly successful Farmers’ Market elitist highlights some of the tensions inherent in the food debate and makes it easier for sceptics to be dismissive.

If the sustainable-food movement is to make good on its environmental and social promises, it will have to figure out ways to resolve these vicious contradictions. For all the buzz surrounding farmers' markets and CSAs, for all the popularity of Slow Food USA and its burgeoning local *convivia* (chapters), the vast majority of people in the U.S. remain priced out of the trend -- and many of them are unaware of the alternatives to industrial food...it's no easy thing to ask low-income people to pay more for their food. At the same time, we can't rightfully ask small-scale organic farmers growing for nearby markets to charge less for their produce. They're competing against a highly consolidated, lavishly subsidized industrial food system -- and few of them are doing much better than just scraping by. (Philpott, 2007).

## Eric Schlosser, Michael Pollan and Alice Waters

[American authors Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser have recently appeared in the new film *Food Inc* (2009, directed by Robert Kenner). At the time of writing, the film has not opened locally, but I hope to view it in time to include its ideas in my presentation].



Figure 4 *Food Inc* film promotional poster



Figure 5 Eric Schlosser

Schlosser is well-known for his 2001 book *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. His investigation into the fast food industry documented the history of McDonalds in particular, but also fast food in general and raised questions about food safety, health and obesity, environmental and social concerns for rural communities and ranchers, exploitation of immigrant workers and teenagers, and animal welfare. The book was a bestseller and raised awareness of food issues to a new level. The extent of the industrialisation of the meatpacking business in particular was brought to light, and the uncomfortable level of power wielded over common foods by a few major corporations was another theme of the book (Schlosser, 2002). Schlosser focused his concern on the social dimensions of the industrialisation of food, and the deep changes being wrought in the rural hinterlands of the United States. His book exposed the real costs of cheap food, and how the free market rhetoric of many of the large companies he talks about is belied by the behind-the-scenes subsidies. The power and influence of the big corporations like McDonalds over US government policy on minimum wages, food safety and agricultural policy is revealed in Schlosser's book, and is an unsettling window on how food production has changed drastically in the last 50 years. The emphasis on uniformity, speed and convenience is at the heart of the fast food industry and provides a stark contrast with the vision of organisations like Slow Food.



Michael Pollan is the author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food* and is one of the US's best known commentators on food issues. He is the Knight Professor of Journalism at UC Berkeley and also appears in the film *Food Inc.* In an interesting example of the power of giant agribusiness corporations, he was recently scheduled to speak at Cal Poly, a State University in California, but "Harris Ranch Beef Company Chairman David E. Wood wrote to Cal Poly President Warren Baker threatening to withdraw a pledged \$500,000 donation for a new meat processing facility on the campus if Pollan's 'unchallenged forum to promote his stand against conventional agricultural practices' was not rethought" (Ethicurean, 2009). Wood's action sparked plenty of moral outrage about academic freedom, but Pollan's planned one hour speech was turned into a place on a panel instead, so the threat was at least partially successful although the publicity generated must surely have undermined the intentions of Harris Beef. *The Omnivore's Dilemma* begins with the question most of us ask ourselves fairly regularly: What should we have



omnivore's dilemma: a natural history of four meals, 2006).

for dinner? "This book is a long and fairly involved answer to this seemingly simple question. Along the way, it also tries to figure out how such a simple question could ever have gotten so complicated. As a culture we seem to have arrived at a place where whatever native wisdom we may once have possessed about eating has been replaced by confusion and anxiety" (Pollan, *The omnivore's dilemma: a natural history of four meals*, 2006). Pollan tracks

Figure 6 Michael Pollan a conventional fast food meal, large-scale organic production, a 'locavore' dinner and finally a dinner in which he has hunted or collected all the ingredients. Along the way he describes many aspects of food and farming, from the conventional and industrial to the radical. His exploration of the rise of corn as a crop is fascinating with its historical insights and examination of the way subsidies prop up the cultivation of vast swathes of monoculture. His follow-up book, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* promotes the message 'Eat food; not too much; mostly plants' and he tackles the way nutritionists have atomised food into its micro constituents and ultimately confused consumers rather than enlightening them. He also provides intriguing histories of the wildly different traditional diets of various indigenous people in diverse parts of the world, all of which seemed to function quite well despite the narrowness of some of them (Pollan, 2008). As the dustjacket notes tell us, "The professionalization of eating has failed to make Americans healthier...The more we worry about nutrition, the less healthy we become."

Alice Waters is one of the three Slow Food International Vice Presidents (the others are Vandana Shiva from India, and John Kariuki Mwangi of Kenya) and the owner and executive chef of Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California. Waters came to Berkeley in the 1960s when Berkeley was the epicentre of the counter-culture. “We had the sense that we could do anything and we could change the world. We wanted to live differently” she said and when she spent time in France in 1965 she discovered a food culture where people sat down together to eat meals made of food they had bought from their local market, and this extended to every layer of society, no matter what their financial status (Andrews, 2008, p. 13).

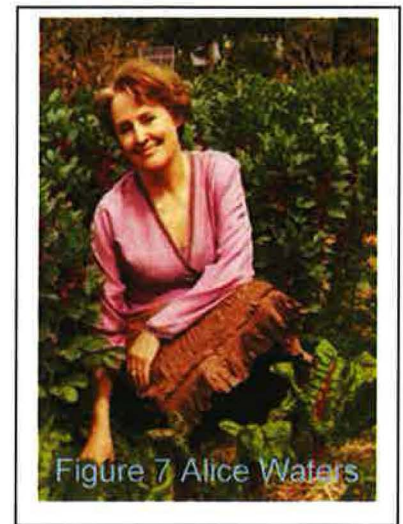


Figure 7 Alice Waters

Alice and Chez Panisse are convinced that the best-tasting food is organically and locally grown and harvested in ways that are ecologically sound by people who are taking care of the land for future generations. The quest for such ingredients has always determined the restaurant's cuisine. Since 1971, Chez Panisse has invited diners to partake of the immediacy and excitement of vegetables just out of the garden, fruit right off the branch, and fish straight out of the sea. In doing so, Chez Panisse has established a network of nearby suppliers who, like the restaurant, are striving for both environmental harmony and delicious flavor. (Chez Panisse, 2009)

Waters is regarded as a hugely influential figure in the US food and cooking scene but has resisted the ‘celebrity chef’ tag. In her foreword to a book by Carlo Petrini she writes: “Slow Food reminds us that our natural resources are limited, and that we must resist the ethic of disposability that is reflected everywhere in our culture. Slow Food reminds us that food is more than fuel to be consumed as quickly as possible” (Petrini, 2001, pp. ix-x). She also provides a foreword to a cookbook celebrating the Ferry Plaza Farmers’ Market and tells us “going to the market also celebrates the rhythms of the earth and supports the culture and traditions of diversified, sustainable, local agriculture... We can give our money directly to the people who need it the most, without middle-men. When I buy food at the market I know I’m paying the real cost of food... I learn directly about the actual costs to the farmers themselves” (Hirshheimer & Knickerbocker, 2006, p. 5).

In 1996 Waters launched the Chez Panisse Foundation which promotes



edible gardens and food education for school children, beginning with a local school near the restaurant in Berkeley, Martin Luther King Jr Middle School.

She calls her project the School Lunch Initiative, and the program has evolved into an entire curriculum. Students grow the produce, learn kitchen skills while preparing it, and then benefit from eating healthy meals in the school cafeteria. The Edible Schoolyard was designed to lay the foundation for a lifetime of healthy eating habits, but it also had a lesson for every hour of the school day: history classes tried out ancient grains that once helped Native American populations survive, and science classes could observe the firsthand effects of thermal energy.

(Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2006)

Waters is the highly-recognisable face of Slow Food in the USA, which makes her very high profile and means her opinions are often sought. It has also made her subject to the same charges of elitism that have already been referred to, but there is no way to deny that she has been a very influential figure in American cuisine: "Waters was the first high-end restaurateur to put her kitchen at the service of social change, and to define her clientele far more widely than the glamorous crowd in the dining rooms" (Shapiro, 2009).

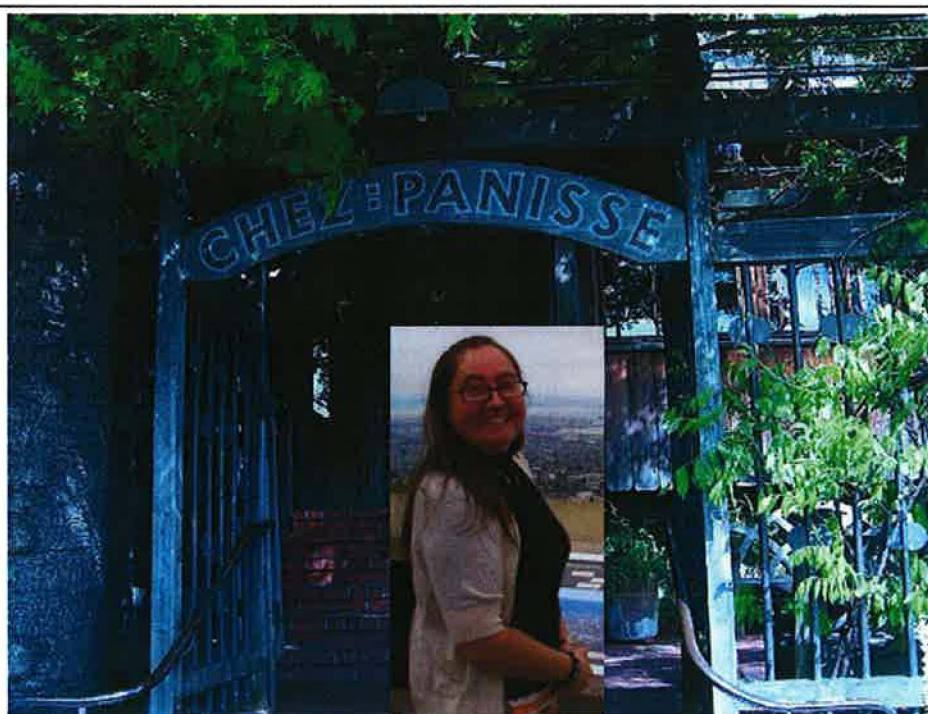


Figure 8 In this highly accomplished professional composite photo, the author is seen outside Chez Panisse where she ate lunch in July as part of her extremely valuable research for this project although she didn't actually have her photo taken on the doorstep like a dork. Lunch was awesome.

## Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, British chefs have also been encouraging home cooks to think about the provenance and origins of their food too. Jamie Oliver began his stellar career with the TV series *The Naked Chef* in 1999. The 'naked' reference came from his determination to keep the



Figure 9 Jamie Oliver

food simple and use a straightforward, uncomplicated approach to cooking it. From this launching pad Oliver has become a one-man food revolution, whose outputs include books and TV programmes on food in schools, growing and cooking your own vegetables, teaching under-privileged young people to become chefs, and introducing hopelessly unskilled home cooks to simple, healthy food easily prepared at home. His two

television specials *Jamie's Fowl Dinners* (2008) and *Jamie Saves our Bacon* (2009) have introduced consumers to the horrors of the industrial production of chickens and pigs, respectively, and encouraged them to choose wisely: buying British pork and "highlight[ing] the welfare implications for [chickens] as a result of our persistent demand for cheap food, and hopefully chang[ing] the way we shop forever" (Jamie Oliver.com (a), 2009).

Jamie's latest show takes him to the USA for an American version of his *Ministry of Food* programme. Originally set in a northern English coal town, "*Ministry of Food* is basically about inspiring people to get back into their kitchens and make simple, delicious food from scratch again... We really seem to have lost the plot a bit when it comes to passing on our cooking skills from generation to generation - so much so, that some of the people I met in my cooking classes while filming the TV show didn't know how to mash a potato" (Jamie Oliver.com (b), 2009). The American version is being filmed in Huntington, West Virginia, a coal town with levels of obesity and diabetes so bad that it was identified as the unhealthiest place in America (Witchel, 2009).

To some degree, Oliver's approach is more cooking-focused than production focused, but his relentless quest to have people use fresh ingredients in simple ways inevitably leads to discussions about where and how food is grown. The television specials on chickens and pigs were a much



more overt foray into the world of agriculture, and his *Jamie at Home* (2007) series had him cooking home-grown produce every week. "I grew up watching that TV programme *The Good Life*, about Barbara and Tom, the couple who didn't have much but grew everything themselves. They lived next to the posh couple, Margo and Jerry, who had everything but weren't all that happy... which one of the couples did we all aspire to be?... My view is that we're all pretty spoilt now, as far as luxuries are concerned, but I reckon that the best luxury in life comes from experience... and knowledge, and I think food and cooking are among the most important things out there for us to learn about" (Oliver, *Jamie at home: cook your way to the good life*, 2007). His strong social messages are quite a feature, and his school dinners programme had a major and ongoing political impact and Oliver has even placed a 'manifesto' on his website setting out his beliefs about food education in British schools (Oliver, *My manifesto for school dinners*, 2006). His 'Fifteen Foundation' was created in 2002 and takes roughly fifteen young people from underprivileged, disadvantaged or criminal backgrounds at a time and offers them training in the restaurant business. 159 have graduated so far from two schools in Britain, one in Amsterdam and one in Melbourne (Witchel, 2009). During the filming of *Jamie's Ministry of Food* in Rotherham, Yorkshire, Oliver "built a community center where residents could learn to cook inexpensively for their families while instilling the idea that healthful eating is not a luxury. "They thought that cooking a meal and feeding it to your family was for posh people," he said. Some participants in the show had never even had a kitchen table. They ate takeout food on their floors" (ibid). The evolution of Oliver's beliefs has taken place quite rapidly and very publicly: "There's still a glint of the cheeky *Naked Chef*, but increasingly he's turned into a hard-line social activist" (Skewes & Devlyn, 2009).

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, on the other hand, has been a campaigner for growing or collecting your food right from the start of his television career. He also once worked at the River Café in London where Jamie Oliver spent some of his early years, but Hugh didn't last long before being fired for lacking the "rigour and discipline" required for a busy commercial kitchen (Whitworth, 2009). In 1998 he moved to rural Dorset and began trying to grow and rear a portion of his food, and the 1999 television series *Escape to River Cottage*, which documented his attempts, was very successful (RiverCottage.net, 2009). A move to larger premises, River Cottage HQ, took place in 2004 as Hugh tried his hand at being a smallholder rearing animals for slaughter and growing a large garden. In 2006 his by now quite substantial enterprise moved again, this

time to Park Farm on the Devon-Dorset border, which “[u]ntil recently... was a traditional, family-run farm. It had fallen into disuse, but the River Cottage team are restoring it to its former state of busy productivity, raising livestock and growing a huge range of fresh produce to supply the kitchen and the new,

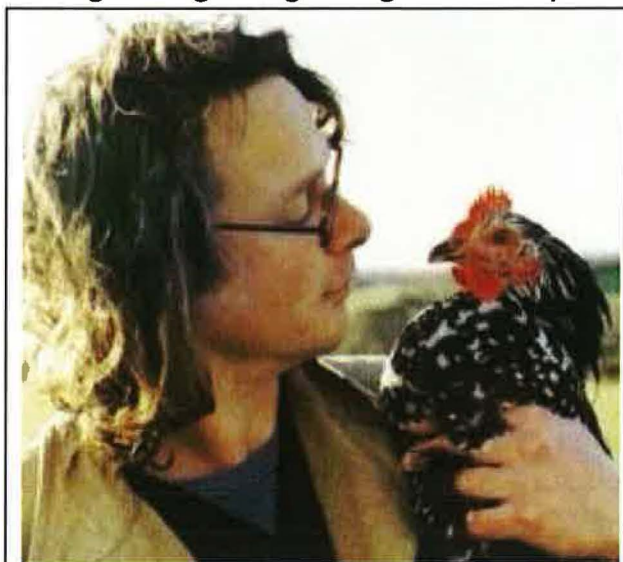


Figure 10 Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

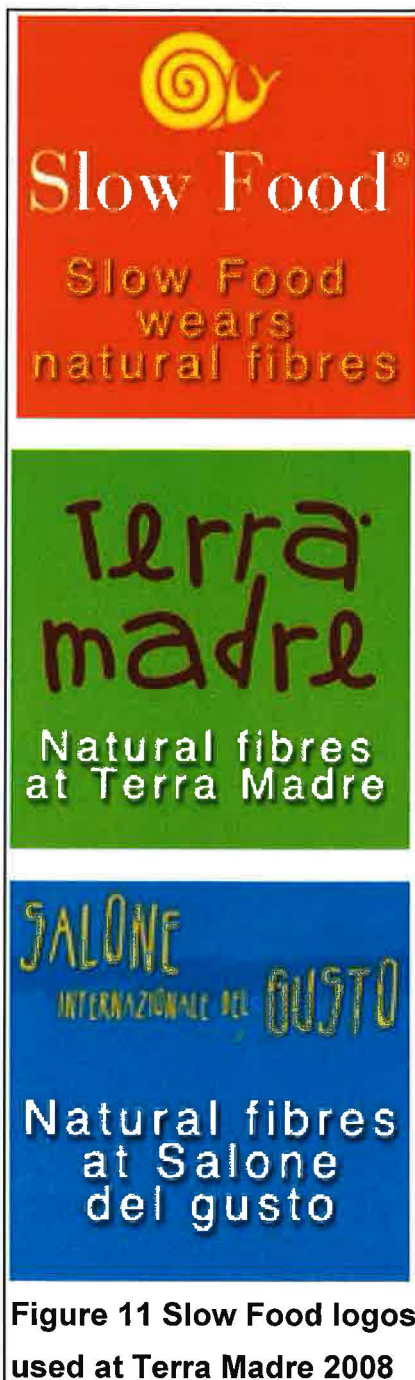
improved range of events” (ibid). The website doesn’t comment on what had led to the ‘disuse’ of the farm. Hugh is also the Patron of the National Farmers’ Retail and Markets Association (FARMA) which promotes and supports Farmers’ and Growers’ markets around the UK (National Farmers’ Retail and Markets Association, 2009). His shows often show him preparing products for sale at local markets, and strong emphasis

is placed on being a part of the rural community around him.

He likes to emphasise the emotional pleasures of learning to cook well. “I want you to enjoy cooking, eating and feeding your friends, because I believe these are among the higher pleasures and privileges of our short time on the planet” (Fearnley-Whittingstall, 2004, p. 8). He has said “you have to be prepared to spend some time in the kitchen. “You can’t make food appear magically from nowhere on your table. And I never want to stop encouraging people to believe that the time they spend cooking is going to be quality time not drudge time. That’s the most important thing”” (Whitworth, 2009).

He is also well-known for his strong stance on ethical meat. *Hugh’s Chicken Run* was broadcast in 2008 and shows Hugh farming chickens intensively and in a free-range way to compare both methods. He has since launched a campaign to improve welfare of farmed chickens called “Chicken Out” (Chicken Out, 2009). His *River Cottage Meat Book* was published in 2004 and won the André Simon Award for Food Book of the Year (RiverCottage.net, 2009). In it Hugh writes extensively about his philosophies on meat eating, including a ‘meat manifesto’ (Fearnley-Whittingstall, 2004) and he begins the book by saying “I believe that the way we produce and use meat requires radical reform... meat eating at its worst [is] an ignominious expression of greed, indifference and heartlessness.” He encourages the consumer to be aware of the production system behind their food, just as Slow Food does.





**Figure 11 Slow Food logos used at Terra Madre 2008**

## Fibre Naturali – Natural Fibres at Terra Madre 2008

In 2008 Slow Food decided to include natural fibres in the biannual Terra Madre event in Turin, Italy. I was lucky enough to be somewhat randomly selected to attend the inaugural appearance of natural fibres at this massive event. The Slow Food organisation had created a 'Natural Fibres Manifesto' (see Appendix 2) setting out the ideals identified. Carlo Petrini attended our workshop and endorsed the goal of promoting natural fibre use as an ethical choice. The size and political clout of Slow Food was very apparent and our producer group was extremely varied and multicultural. We toured textile factories, stayed in Biella, a town that has been based around textile manufacturing for centuries, and even enjoyed a mayoral reception at the Biella Town Hall before a multi-course dinner created by a Michelin-starred chef from traditional, local ingredients usually associated with the food of the peasants of the area. The Australasian merino growers there (no other fibre type from New Zealand or Australia was represented) gravitated together and handily adopted an Italian alpaca farmer who acted as our unofficial translator in times of need (which was

fairly often). The gathering was all slightly mind-boggling but ultimately positive and uplifting.

The organisers have since established a website promoting the ideals contained in the manifesto.

For thousands of years textile industry had been based exclusively on the processing of **natural fibres**, until a proper revolution took place with the introduction on the market of chemical fibres, generated by men through the chemical process... During last century the "man made" fibres have changed the planet with significant social and environmental consequences... **We want to promote natural fibres** because round them there is an entire world of people, stories, tradition, culture and nature-tied rhythms that must be protected from the too rapid changes brought about by globalisation... It is essential that men use their know-how and their sense to go back to a

perfect status of harmony with nature.

(Fibre Naturali (a), 2009)

The graphs seen in the Introduction were shown at the workshop and demonstrate how, in common with food, the changes to production and consumption of fibre in the second part of the last century have completely altered humanity's interaction with a fundamental tenet of civilisation as we have known it for the last several thousand years. Eric Schlosser has said of food that it has changed more in the last 40 years than in the previous 40,000 (Schlosser, 2002, p. 7). Comment is often made, usually by some TV presenter co-opted into free publicity for the launch of a new gadget, that technology is being updated ever-faster, and our own lives bear witness to that. The pace of change is incredibly quick and I think this is where industrial food has come unstuck amongst some consumers – the primal nature of eating as our most basic interaction with nature makes us suspicious of turkey twizzlers (made famous by Jamie Oliver's *School Dinners* programme) in a way that most of us are not of the BlackBerry® or the Xbox 360™.

The Natural Fibres workshop and displays at Terra Madre and Salone del Gusto attempted to bring fibre and fashion under the same umbrella as food, in positioning fibre as an ancient human requirement which has evolved intricate cultural associations. The Natural Fibres Manifesto posits that "these essential concepts of pleasure and quality can also be applied to another vital human necessity: the one of getting dressed and expressing our own style through clothes. Beyond the pleasure of food, [there is] also [...] aesthetic enjoyment and the search for a better quality of life. The taste for beautiful and comfortable things was born in humans through a slow process, developed over centuries, combining utility, quality, culture, taste and tradition... "Fast Fashion" is becoming for garments what "Fast Food" is for nutrition: it destroys differences... and speeds consumption, killing traditions" (see Appendix 2).

The world is changing, consumers' needs change. The contemporary lifestyle, very dynamic, expands requests for "easy-wear" and "easy-care products", often with particular characteristics such as stain or water repellence, insect repellence, abrasion resistance, anti-static or anti-bacterial behaviour, UV-protection, odour absorption, etc... Garments seem to become a non-durable good, like bread or fruit: it is not essential that they last long, but it is important that they are cheap... In a world market full and competitive, the success of brands like Zara, Hennes & Mauritz or Mango demonstrate that a low price and a rapid regeneration of collections are crucial factors to attract consumers. In many cases traditional two seasons of fashion (spring/summer and



autumn/winter) become four or six seasons, with a quick renewal of the supply: it is the so called 'fast fashion.'

(Fibre Naturali (b), 2009)

For natural fibres, the problem is not only the furious demands of disposable fashion for cheap, fast production but also the ability of the textile industry to bypass agriculture altogether when sourcing raw materials. I believe there is a gap, too, between food and fibre in terms of the perception of how vital they are for sustaining life. Polypropylene might be stinky and inflammable, but it won't give you heart disease, diabetes or *E. coli*. People who cheerfully seek out organic tomatoes at the Farmers' Market won't necessarily spend money on clothing made from natural fibres, and clothing in general has an uphill battle convincing many that it is a necessity and not simply a discretionary and personal choice. In this regard, fibre will find it harder than food to break into the consciousness of the ordinary consumer, but by the same token it could well be that once the groundwork has been laid by the food movement, consumers will be more receptive to the voice and concerns of natural fibre producers.



Figure 12 Some of the producers with the organisers of the Terra Madre Natural Fibres workshop 2008

## **2009 – International Year of Natural Fibres**



Figure 13 IYNF logo

2009 was named the International Year of Natural Fibres (IYNF) by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (for a list of natural fibres and short descriptions, see Appendix 3). The aim is to “raise awareness of [natural fibres’] importance not only to producers and industry, but to consumers and the environment” (FAO, 2009). This connection of consumers and the environment with producers is right on track with what we have seen with food. The website [<http://www.naturalfibres2009.org/en/index.html>] certainly talks the talk, telling viewers that

fibres form fabrics, ropes and twines that have been fundamental to society since the dawn of civilization. But over the past half century, natural fibres have been displaced in our clothing, household furnishings, industries and agriculture by man-made fibres with names like acrylic, nylon, polyester and polypropylene. The success of synthetics is due mainly to cost. Unlike natural fibres harvested by farmers, commonly used synthetic fibres are mass produced from petrochemicals to uniform strengths, lengths and colours, easily customized to specific applications. Relentless competition from synthetics and the current global economic downturn impact the livelihoods of millions of people who depend on natural fibre production and processing (ibid).

New Zealand sheep farmers are undoubtedly part of this picture, as are our local wool processors.

The FAO has identified 5 reasons to choose natural fibres on their ‘Why Natural Fibres?’ page.

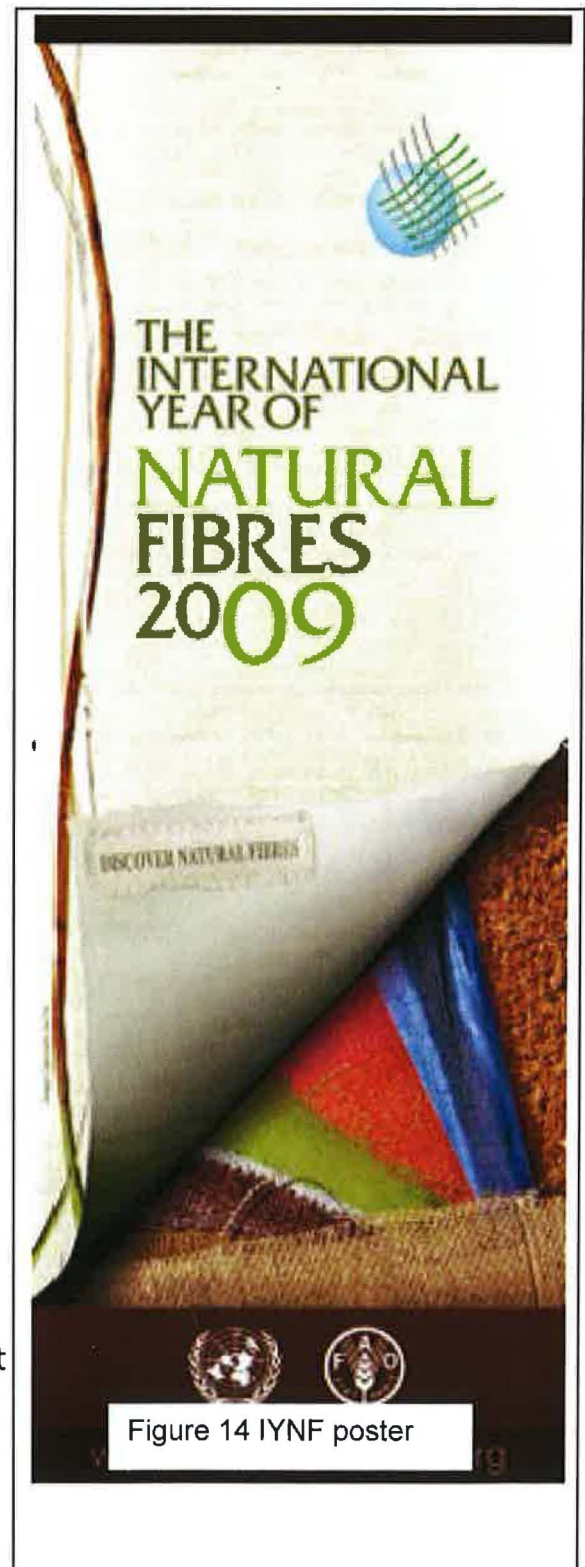
- Healthy – natural fibres have a high degree of breathability and moisture-wicking or absorption, as well as anti-bacterial action and anti-fungal properties. Natural fibres are less likely to cause skin irritations and allergies. Wool is also fire-retardant and able to absorb up to 35% of its weight in moisture.
- Responsible – the economies of many developing nations and many



millions of people are dependent on the production of natural fibres. Many producers are small scale family farmers.

- Sustainable – natural fibres are described as the ultimate in renewable resources, as well as being environmentally friendly. Making one tonne of polypropylene releases 3 tonnes of carbon dioxide into the air. In contrast, jute absorbs as much as 2.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the air per tonne of dry fibre.
- High-tech – natural fibres have inherently useful properties like low weight and mechanical strength. Natural fibre composites are increasingly being used in the car manufacturing industry in Europe, as well as the global construction industry and in 'geotextiles' which strengthen earthworks and then gradually decompose as the ground stabilises.
- Fashionable – the FAO describes efforts by designers to make their collections carbon neutral or organic in a bid to create an eco-fashion movement that intersects with the 'fair trade' movement, and incorporates concerns about conditions and pay for textile workers, and hopefully for growers too.

The goal of the FAO and the Terra Madre organisers has been to try and unite the vast and disparate group that is global natural fibre producers. There is naturally some competition between some like fibres – cotton and merino is a classic – but in the face of the radical changes of the last half century it is imperative that we get a grasp on the big picture stuff. Olive oil, cocoa beans and free range chooks are all very different products, but they can all be a part of a global food



movement. Cotton, for centuries the world's dominant textile fibre, is enjoying some benefits of the 'organic' label. The 2007-08 growing season saw a 152% rise in the production of organic cotton globally and organic fibre clothing and linen sales in the US grew by 26% over the previous year in 2006 (Organic Trade Association, 2009). Lesser-known fibres such as abaca and coir are making inroads into new uses as manufacturers seek 'greener' alternatives for industrial inputs. One of the original goals of Terra Madre was for producers from developing countries to know "that they are not alone" (Andrews, 2008, p. 50). Natural fibre producers could really benefit from collaborative action to try and educate consumers on behalf of all the products that they grow or farm.

It is difficult to assess the impact of an event like the IYNF on consumers. Most of the events organised to celebrate the year have been created by academics or interest groups already involved with fibre in some way. There certainly hasn't been vast media coverage here, despite NZ Trade and Enterprise being one of the major event sponsors. The occasional mention in a farming newspaper, generally in connection with the parlous state of the wool industry, is about it. One of the few consumer comments I found was on review site yelp.com – the writer called the IYNF "a somewhat silly" idea and no-one bothered to respond so after two months the site closed the ability to add comments (W, 2009). The original poster of the comment did at least add the URL for the IYNF site, but I can't help thinking of the sniggering that accompanied reports of 2008's International Year of the Potato – I now feel slightly guilty and wish potato growers of the world all the best!



## **LOHAS**

LOHAS is a term I first heard from Merino NZ several years ago now. The acronym stands for 'Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability' and represents a "market segment focused on health and fitness, the environment, personal development, sustainable living and social justice" (LOHAS, 2009). Under the heading "Changing our footprint on the environment" the website states:

**LOHAS companies** practice "responsible capitalism" by providing goods and services using economic and environmentally sustainable business practices. LOHAS business owners and industry leaders from around the world meet each year at the LOHAS Conference to discuss industry trends, share ideas and learn how to run a successful LOHAS business... **LOHAS consumers**, sometimes referred to as Lohasians, are interested in products covering a range of market sectors and sub-sectors, including: Green building supplies, socially responsible investing and "green stocks", alternative healthcare, organic clothing and food, personal development media, yoga and other fitness products, eco-tourism and more.

LOHAS estimates that 25% of the US population, 41 million people, are consumers who fit the profile. They put a value of 209 billion dollars on the economic power of the market segment in the USA. Over half of that derives from the "Personal Health" sector, which includes food, dietary supplements, beauty products and "mind body spirit" products. Apparel comes under the heading of "Natural Lifestyles," along with furnishings, organic cleaning products, eco light bulbs and "social change philanthropy." The other sectors are Green Building, Alternative Transportation, Eco Tourism and Alternative Energy (LOHAS , 2008). They have an annual conference, a weekly email newsletter and a magazine, all promoting businesses chasing the market sector to one another and in theory to consumers. It is a very business-focused marketing tool, essentially, so it is different to some of the other approaches already examined in that reservations about the political dimensions of capitalism are absent – it's all about how to capture those green dollars, man.

The "Cradle to Cradle" approach to manufacturing pioneered by Michael Braungart and William McDonough (Braungart & McDonough, 2009) over the last decade has some similar intentions. In the case of Braungart and McDonough they argue that industry doesn't have to damage the planet, it just needs to rethink fundamentally the way it produces goods, using nature as a model for how to eliminate wastage from the system. LOHAS companies likewise are not interested in dismantling industry and capitalism, they just want to position themselves as sustainable businesses, socially responsible and environmentally concerned and aware.

There is the distinct whiff of the 'New Age' about the LOHAS consumer profile in the US, but in other parts of the world LOHAS consumers are defined slightly differently. According to the main website, "LOHASians in New Zealand express their LOHAS values through outdoor experiences, seeking a connection with the landscape and concern about social issues. This differs from U.S.-based LOHAS consumers, who typically have a stronger focus on personal well-being" (LOHAS (b), 2008). In Europe and Australia, studies have found that LOHAS customers are far more likely to look for some kind of accreditation or certification mark on products they are buying – this discrimination is less evident in the USA. Back in NZ the key features of the LOHAS market have been defined as:

**Key Facts: LOHAS, New Zealand**

- 32 percent of population Solution Seekers (NZ Equivalent of LOHAS)?
- 57 percent female
- Greatest concentration (29 percent) are in the 45-54 year age bracket?
- Slight skew toward rural rather than metropolitan locations?
- Income profile of NZ LOHAS is growing over time (ibid).

The information on the international LOHAS page comes mostly from a report by Moxie Design in Wellington which is available from the NZ Business Council for Sustainable Development website (NZBSCD, 2006). In the report the authors say of members of the consumer group that:

they aren't giving up on the (technological and scientific) benefits of modern life, they just want them delivered in new and more environmentally and socially acceptable ways. Solution Seekers are largely reliant on producers bringing alternatives to the market...Analysing more than just the promised features and benefits they are also considering the entire manufacturing process in their decision making. They want to know where and how products and services originate.

As a result producers need to actively inform and educate Solution Seekers on new alternatives and help them feel they have the control to make wiser choices. This requires new approaches for brands to engage these consumers. (Salmon, 2006, p. 5)

The report claims that "Sustainability is no longer a concept, it's a serious business opportunity" (ibid, p. 2). The very business-orientated nature of this research and information helps counter the tendency by conservative producers and manufacturers to dismiss those consumers who are interested in sustainability as slightly mad hippies. Natural fibres are renewable and should be sustainable – the LOHAS sector needs our serious attention as producers, with or without the intermediary party of marketers.



## **Eco-Fashion**

There are times when the term 'eco-fashion' seems in grave peril of being an oxymoron. Nothing says disposability like 'fashion' whose very nature implies change and even fickleness. It is easy to write the fashion world off as a superficial, empty-headed and non-essential part of human society, yet there is a strong human instinct to use clothing and decoration as a way of sending messages about yourself to others and reinforcing what you believe about yourself. Clothing and adornment is a large component of cultural expression, and can help us to feel part of our society, or indeed give us an opportunity to signal our distance from it, or membership of an exclusive sub-set, for example punks, skaters or emos.

Whatever one's personal feelings about fashion, it is indisputably a multi-billion dollar business globally, and one that is very attractive to young people entering the workforce today. Many tertiary institutions in this country offer fashion design courses, such as AUT's Bachelor of Design in Fashion (three year course), Massey's Wellington-based four year degree and Otago Polytechnic's three year degree course. In addition there are government-backed programmes such as the Dunedin Fashion Incubator, based at the Institute of Design at the Otago Polytechnic, which is part of the Upstart Business Incubator Trust set up by local government, NZTE, University of Otago, the Otago Polytechnic and corporate partners to foster new business start-ups in Dunedin. The WTO International Trade Statistics report (WTO, 2009) page on clothing overleaf shows that clothing was the least affected merchandise type in the recent recession, so far at least. "Fashion is big business. More people are involved in the buying, selling and production of clothing than any other business in the world. Everyday, millions of workers design, sew, glue, dye, and transport clothing to stores" (PBS). Over a billion people worldwide are employed in the clothing and textile sector (Black, 2008, p. 14).

However, over the last 100 years or so fashion has become a quite different beast from its original cultural expression of status, being no longer exclusively the domain of the wealthy with 'trickle down' to the rest of us. It has also fractured into many different forms, the rigid dictates about what is in style seen in the past are long gone, and fashion means different things to different people.

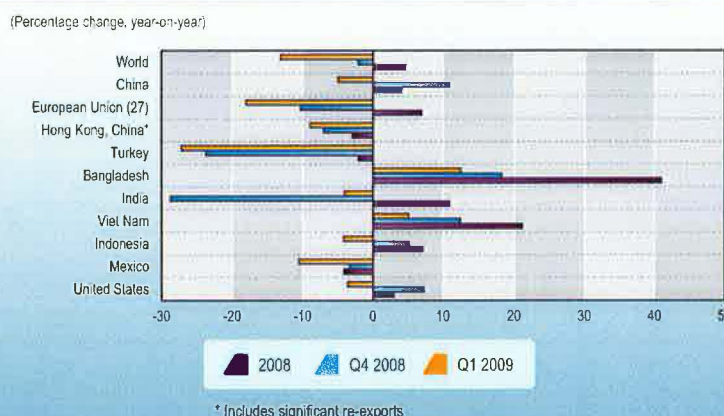
**Clothing is showing resistance to downward trends**

Chart II.15 Clothing exports of China by destination, 2000 and 2008



Among all exports, clothing is one of the least-affected so far, showing a mere 2.1 per cent decline in the fourth quarter of 2008. Growth during January-September 2008 was modest, resulting in exports expanding by 4.6 per cent in 2008. China, which accounted for 33 per cent of world exports, saw its exports expand by only 4 per cent in 2008, far below the 20.8 per cent growth registered in 2007. With the expiry of the European Union's growth caps on ten categories of textiles and clothing imports from China, exports to the European Union surged by 37 per cent.

Chart II.16 Leading exporters of clothing



Between 2000 and 2008, the least-developed countries (LDCs) benefiting from preferential market access increased their share in the EU clothing market from 8.3 per cent to 9.1 per cent. Ninety-nine per cent of EU imports from the LDCs originated from five countries – Bangladesh (81.5 per cent), Cambodia (9.5 per cent), Madagascar (3.7 per cent), Myanmar (2.5 per cent) and Laos (1.9 per cent).

For the United States, the second major clothing market after the European Union, imports shrank by 2.8 per cent. Imports from China, its major supplier, nearly stagnated at previous year levels. Imports from Viet Nam and Bangladesh increased by 19.8 per cent and 11 per cent respectively.

Imports from LDCs increased by 3 per cent, with LDCs increasing their share in the clothing market of the United States from 6.4 per cent in 2000 to 8.8 per cent in 2008. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Haiti, Lesotho and Madagascar dominated, accounting for 98.9 per cent of this market share.

In the last quarter of 2008, exports from China increased by 10.9 per cent and started to decline only during the first quarter of 2009, by a modest 5 per cent. This contributed to the relatively better performance of world trade in clothing compared with other sectors. In contrast, the European Union saw its exports drop by 10.3 per cent in the last quarter of 2008 and further contracted by another 18.1 per cent during the first quarter of 2009. Turkey was particularly hard hit as its exports shrank by 23.7 per cent and 27.2 per cent consecutively over the same period.

EU imports from outside the European Union declined moderately by 2.7 per cent in the last quarter of 2008 and by 9.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2009. The corresponding declines in the imports of the United States were practically of the same magnitude: down by 2.2 per cent during the last quarter of 2008 and down by 10 per cent in the first quarter of 2009. US imports from its major suppliers (China, Viet Nam, Indonesia and Bangladesh) increased in both quarters. Imports from Bangladesh in particular expanded substantially, by 18.4 per cent and 12.9 per cent respectively during the last quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009. Imports of the European Union from China and Bangladesh increased respectively by 19.7 per cent and 13 per cent in the last quarter of 2008 and by a further 3 per cent and 6.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2009. Imports from other countries, especially Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco, shrank considerably in both quarters.



Perhaps one of the most radical changes of the past decade, and certainly the most relevant to this project, is the rise of 'Fast Fashion.' Just like fast food, fast fashion is cheap and disposable. "Relative to income, clothes are now far cheaper than they were a few decades ago," writes Sandy Black (p. 14) which reflects the situation we have seen with food. "Cheap fashion means disposable fashion" she continues, and the figures for volumes of discarded clothing going to landfill, and being exported to developing countries are truly mindboggling. A BBC article on measures being taken by the UK government to address the problems of fast fashion quotes the figure of 2 million tonnes of clothing ending up in British landfills each year (BBC News, 2009). Fast fashion is used by the industry to describe fast-turnaround cheap versions of the latest catwalk styles which appear in the high street chain stores just a couple of weeks after the designer garment which provides the inspiration was being paraded in Milan or Paris. New styles come into these stores at the rate of two or more a day; items that have been available for a couple of weeks are removed, and the whole emphasis is on buying it now, cheap, wearing it once or twice and quickly moving onto the next thing (before the cheap garment falls apart). A *New York Times* article links the rise of fast fashion with the move by some famous designers of high level fashion to also design lines for cheap chain retail outlets, bringing the latest look straight onto the main street and proving 'high' fashion isn't of necessity elitist. Black (p. 11) draws attention to the end of GATT tariffs on imports from China and India in early 2005 as being another major force in driving down prices. Some industry members are beginning to express concern over the plummeting price of some fashion garments: "[it] leaves a feeling of unease at how the ultra-cheap clothes can be manufactured. As Michael Fink, president of women's fashion at Saks Fifth Avenue, puts it: 'How cheap can you make it? If it is about being less expensive - who can make these clothes in a responsible manner?'" (Menkes, 2008). Sandy Black (p. 11) explains that as fashion has become faster and cheaper over the last fifteen years, fashion cycles have got quicker and quicker. "This is an unsustainable position for fashion in both the medium and long term. The production and consumption of fashion represent two extremes of a very long, fragmented and complex supply chain" which stretches from fibre production and processing through textile creation and designers, to buyers and retailers and finally to the consumer.

Concerns about sustainability in the fashion business have been growing for a while then, and “with similarities to the organic food movement, lobbying over a period of time by small eco-fashion companies and campaigning organisations has now taken hold and new thinking is beginning to emerge on a much more comprehensive scale, impacting all levels of the supply chain. The UK fashion industry is going green, especially on the high street” (Black, 2008, p. 17). In Britain, the government, in the shape of DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) has become sufficiently concerned about the sustainability of the clothing industry to release the *Sustainable Clothing Action Plan* (DEFRA, 2009). “The clothing industry is a high value sector,” the report says, but “this economic success story also has a significant adverse environmental and social “footprint” across its global lifecycle – with rising consumption being a key factor in this” (p. 4). The government aims to help the industry figure out ways to tackle the issues, without using legislation to force changes.

Growing concern about the future sustainability of the fashion sector is clearly a reality, making the present an ideal time for a resurgence of ‘Eco-fashion.’ Black considers that the idea of Eco-fashion has had two outings already, one linked to the hippie revolution of the 1960s and 1970s which she characterises as being ‘anti-fashion’ in that it was part of the alternative lifestyle movement; the other she

dates to the 1990s and categorises as also being somewhat alternative. But with growing consumer interest, and a rash of young

designers who have grown up with green issues and sustainability being foregrounded, “momentum and debate has grown exponentially” for eco-fashion (Black pp. 19-21). “A tipping point has been reached in which the convergence of environmental and ethical issues has been key” (ibid, pp. 106-7).



Figure 15 From the John Smedley Winter 2009 range, featuring NZ merino



## **New Zealand Merino and Zque**

Merino marketing company Merino NZ is often held up as an example of how primary produce can and should be marketed. Chief Executive John Brakenridge is regularly asked to comment on what other industries could be doing to market their products more effectively, and public awareness of and appreciation for merino as a product has grown exponentially since the launch of Merino NZ in 1996. However, prices for the majority of growers have been at very low levels over the last four to five years, and there is some despondency that despite our industry's enviable marketing prowess the sustainability of merino fibre production in New Zealand is still not firmly established.

Merino NZ was created by merino farmers as an incorporated society in 1995, with the aim of differentiating merino fibre from New Zealand from other merino fibre, creating a unique brand to market the fibre to specialist niche markets and undertaking research and development technology transfer activities. Originally, Merino NZ had a contract with the NZ Wool Board to provide these services for fine wool, with funding coming from grower levies collected by the Wool Board (Merino Inc, 2009). Merino growers had long felt aggrieved by being levied at a higher level than other woolgrowers, because their fibre was more valuable, and seeing little or no evidence that the Wool Board was making any effort to market merino fibre from NZ. Received wisdom has it that the world saw NZ merino as an inferior fibre, useful only for blending with Australian wool, which dominates the world merino fibre market in terms of volume. Merino NZ set out to prove this belief wrong by promoting the qualities of merino fibre from this country, notably its low VM contamination, its bright white colour, and its high tensile strength. After the McKinsey Report of 1999, Merino NZ became a commercial wool broking and marketing company (The New Zealand Merino Company Ltd), leaving the original Merino Inc entity to function as R & D manager, and owner of the Merino NZ brand, use of which is licensed to Merino NZ Ltd for use in the textile, yarn and clothing areas. Merino NZ is owned 50% by merino growers through Merino Grower Investments Ltd, and 50% by PGG Wrightson (originally 65% : 35%).

From this history we can see that like other woolgrowers, merino farmers were not the Wool Board's biggest fans. Luckily for us, as a reasonably small group based mostly in the High Country, a fair degree of industry

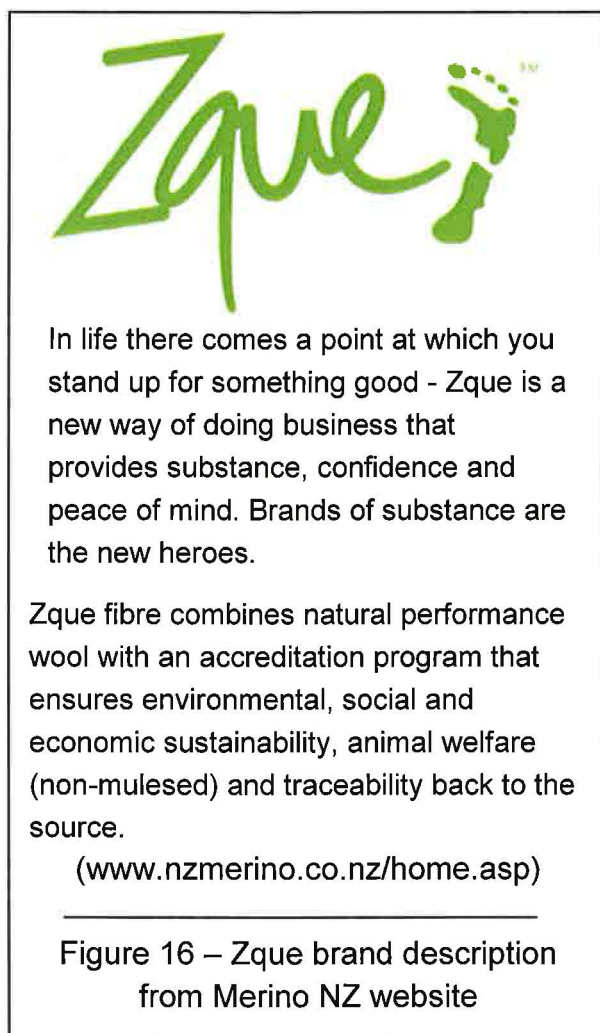
cohesion was possible and we had enough visionaries in the industry to drive changes that had real impact. Perhaps the greatest achievement of Merino NZ to date has been the introduction of the distant ends of the long supply chain to one another: “High Country to High Fashion” (The NZ Merino Company Ltd, 2009). Before the arrival of Merino NZ, many woolgrowers had little or no idea what happened to their wool after it was auctioned, it was simply shipped off into the great unknown and never seen again. Some farmers probably had good relationships with individual wool buyers working for particular wool exporting companies, and a few no doubt were more involved, but the majority of us (besides occasionally attending a wool sale, where your year’s work was auctioned off in a matter of seconds) were painfully ignorant about what might come next. One of the first things the new merino entity did was run a campaign to have merino growers use nylon packs instead of polypropylene as was the norm in the mid 1990s. Brokers had tried to encourage this, without wide success as nylon packs are much more expensive to buy, but some photos and videos of European wool processors pleading for the change, with shots of their staff sitting at lightboxes with tweezers laboriously picking polypropylene fibres out of woven fabric, was enough to effect change much more quickly. By simply explaining to farmers what the problem was (polypropylene fibres shatter when grab samples are taken, while nylon remains more intact and is much easier to remove from finished fabrics) and showing them the impact on others down the supply chain, a revolution was engendered. Last year in Italy we saw polypropylene packs from South African merino growers in an Italian warehouse. The Italian staff were very quick to point them out to the South Africans in our group and complain about the continued use of them.

Merino NZ and its brand partners have always been very quick to use the unique and iconic imagery of the High Country to help them in their quest to sell wool on the merits of its naturalness. The rise of the ‘active outdoors wear’ market has allowed a nice kind of symmetry as seen in the Icebreaker “born here, worn here” line, or Mac Pac’s advance on that: “born here, shorn here, worn here” as seen in the latest *Wilderness* magazine (Mac Pac, 2009). These slogans connect the consumer to the producer through the powerful idea that the clothing you wear is made from fibres grown by an animal which roams in exactly the kind of terrain you as an adventurer want to challenge yourself with. This kind of consumer fits right into the local LOHAS or ‘solution



seeker' profile.

Merino NZ has been proactive about positioning itself as an ideal choice for the ethical consumer. The website makes mention of “the inherent romance and drama of the New Zealand Merino story, with its spectacular environmental backdrop and strong personal dedication of New Zealand's merino growers...” and “the rare quality of New Zealand Merino, as scarce as cashmere, and reflecting its growing environment” (The NZ Merino Company Ltd, 2009). Their Zque brand styles itself a “new fibre category: ethical wool”



(Zque (a), 2009). The choice of language reflects many of the ideals and values of the conscious consumer, appealing to both the conscience and the intelligence of the prospective client. “For brands of substance” says their brochure (Appendix 3); “Zque has been developed by The New Zealand Merino Company Ltd (NZM) to ensure that performance and ethics are positively addressed in relation to fibre supply. We partner with companies who are committed to making a difference, to sustainability, and adding value to all levels of the supply chain.” The website ensures growers are seen as a vital part of this ethical and sustainable vision for the product: “Zque is based on encouraging Merino growers to adopt best management practices and to continually refine and improve their performance with respect to fibre

quality, animal health and welfare, environmental, economic and social values. Zque requires accredited growers to meet the standards outlined in the Zque manual and uses an independent (third party) audit process to ensure that these are complied with” (Zque (b), 2009).

Other initiatives from the merino industry to address consumer concerns include a Life Cycle Assessment study of carbon emissions and energy use (Barber & Pellow, 2006); a rapid undertaking to eliminate mulesing when PETA launched their campaign, and some limited engagement with the vexing and thorny issues of High Country politics, in terms of land use and management.

## Conclusions

I find the whole area of food politics incredibly fascinating, and while I would consider myself an engaged and conscious consumer of food, I also have the benefit of a rural upbringing, in a relatively scientific whanau, so I am wary of the more extreme reactions to agriculture that can characterise the strictly urban “co-producer.” It is now an inescapable fact that industrial food production that compromises the environment, the workforce or animal welfare is repugnant to a majority of people, and consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the kinds of questions that they can ask about what has taken place in order for food to end up in front of them. While it is true that budgetary constraints will dictate what choices are available to a large number of people, it is also true that many people on limited incomes do choose to spend a higher proportion of their income on healthier or more ethically produced food for reasons not limited to economics. All of the food movements or celebrity individuals considered in the first part of the project promote awareness and choice for every member of society, and despite the charges of elitism levelled at ‘food snobs,’ there is a strong democratic theme running through the current surge in food interest.

Of course there will always be individuals who will revel in unhealthy food out of sheer cussedness, but I do believe that a large proportion of the population of the developed world, out of a deep human impulse to take food seriously, are at the very least interested in listening to debates about food. Those who argue against ‘culinary Luddism’ make some excellent points about the gains of agriculture over the centuries in terms of productivity, and it is undoubtedly true that we cannot all live on local seasonal produce. Yet there is great value in more people simply being aware that there is such a thing as local and/or seasonal produce, and producers, and even if it is not feasible for us all to shop at the farmers’ market every week, having more of us understanding where food comes from is as important for producers as it can be for consumers. The epidemic levels of obesity in the world are a stark sign that something is not right with our food system. While we might be making gains against malnutrition globally, some of us are clearly gobbling up more than our fair share of kilojoules.

In Wendell Berry’s famous 1989 article *The Pleasures of Eating* he wrote that “eating is an agricultural act. Eating ends the annual drama of the food



economy that begins with planting and birth. Most eaters, however are no longer aware that this is true... Most urban shoppers would tell you that food is produced on farms. But most of them do not know what farms, or what kinds of farms, or where the farms are, or what knowledge and skills are involved in farming... A significant part of the pleasure of eating is one's accurate consciousness of the lives and the world from which food comes" (Berry, 2009). New Zealanders have a poor record when it comes to appreciating the contributions of agriculture to our economy. I truly think there is an element of 'cultural cringe' for many urban Kiwis who don't know anything about farming and don't particularly want to, out of some kind of misguided embarrassment at being branded as hicks. In fact, every one of us should be supporting and encouraging our world-leading agriculture, and learning enough about it that we can join debates over sustainability or environmental or ethical issues in a meaningful way.

Don Nicolson's comments in the latest Federated Farmers magazine, under the heading "Sustainability is farming" are very pertinent: "Sustainability ought to be a farming word but we've seen it hijacked by consultants and special interest groups who don't create anything but distrust and disharmony. Sustainability has now become an environmental word... issues like palm kernel expeller and animal welfare undermine trust in us all. The agricultural community has been too reactive on those issues... Farming must get on the front foot and we must better articulate our arguments externally and internally. It's all too easy and frankly, tempting, to pull the negative lever. As a result, people know farmers more for what we oppose than what we stand for" (Nicolson, 2009). The growing desire of food consumers to connect with the world from which food comes is a huge opportunity for the agricultural community to reconnect with urbanites. We talked a lot about the dreaded urban-rural divide back in January, and through food farmers have an opportunity to create new links with urban eaters, now that family connections to farms and farmers are no longer sufficient for the majority of us. This reconnection of course creates its own challenges, as we try to explain or justify farming practices that urbanites are unfamiliar with or alarmed by.

True understanding may not always be easy to achieve, but the exponential growth of interest in how food comes to be on your plate, is vitally important for us as primary producers to come to grips with. If it is difficult to justify a particular practice, maybe that practice needs rethinking. If we are

ever going to get to a stage where consumers are willing to pay more for our produce we have to accept that their concerns need to be addressed meaningfully. The opportunity to engage with the end consumer should be available to all farmers; the existence of intermediaries such as producer boards (or supermarket buyers) is essential for most New Zealand farmers, but maintaining some form of connection with 'eaters' is a valuable reality check for both parties. Farmers often feel beleaguered by bad press, but engaging one-on-one with individual consumers, often confused by the various messages they are getting, can be a mutually enlightening experience, although not one that most of us have time for every day.

This year in New Zealand we have seen some powerful examples of food politics, with the Mike King pork debacle and the public backlash against Cadbury for putting palm oil in Dairy Milk® chocolate. Cadbury have managed to redeem themselves not only by ceasing to use palm oil in Dairy Milk® chocolate, but also by announcing their intention to use only fair trade cocoa beans in Dairy Milk®, which is a major concession to the power of the consumer. Whether the local pork industry can restore its reputation in a similar way is a moot point. Their battle has been longer, and their systems are less easy to rearrange quickly than those of chocolate manufacturing. Nor do they have the PR budget of Cadbury, a corporate giant with profit margins beyond the wildest dreams of Kiwi pig farmers.

With the food production scene currently dynamic and tumultuous, what can we conclude about the current state of natural fibre production? When 2009 is the International Year of Natural Fibres does this mean that fibre growers are doomed, being so lost in the wilderness as to require UN intervention? Without doubt, the advent of manmade fibres has been generally catastrophic for natural fibres over the last half century, replacing the charmingly variable elements of the natural production cycle with dull uniformity and predictability, just like the products of McDonald's or any other global food franchise. Unlike food, fibre is hampered in that considerable effort by various entities is required to turn raw fibre into a consumer good. It is one thing to grow carrots, pull up a few bunches and trot them down to your local Farmers' Market once a week; it's wholly unrealistic to stroll down with a fadge full of raw wool and expect the average consumer to be interested in taking some home to wash, card, spin, and weave or knit into fabric which then



has to be cut and sewn into a garment. In the case of fibre, direct sales to the public are not an option for strengthening consumer–producer relationships.

The length of the supply chain between consumer and producer puts fibre on a fundamentally different footing to food, despite sharing some common ground in terms of human skill and tradition, cultural meaning and the agrarian traditions of co-dependence with domestic livestock and crops, the soil and the seasons. Fibre farming can claim an early link to civilisation, just like food, but synthetic fibre production has weakened demand and created consumers easily swayed by arguments about ‘convenience’ or technical geek-speak about specialist fabrics. Some of this jargon has echoes in the advent ‘convenience food’ where all the ‘work’ of cooking has been done, leaving the home cook only the challenge of warming it up; or in the dense nutritional information included in some food labelling with its scientific jargon and impenetrable statistics. Much of the impetus in food politics comes from encouraging the consumer to buy raw ingredients and do the creative transformation stage themselves; this change in patterns of consumption is unfeasible for textile fibres.

Still, I feel it is entirely valid for fibre farmers to feel that glimmer of hope on the dark horizon of the future may represent the spark of consumer revolution in the sphere of food production, and the possibility of a natural fibre counter-revolution can certainly be entertained. In many ways I am a very fortunate fibre producer as I belong to an industry that has been very proactive, largely due to the good fortune of producing wool, the world’s premier textile fibre, according to the FAO. Fine wool is undoubtedly much luckier than other wool types, in terms of fibre demand, and not coincidentally has also been the most proactive in terms of self-promotion. Unlike jute or sisal, wool (and indeed virtually all the animal fibres) is mostly funnelled into textiles for clothing or interior furnishings, which almost guarantees an engagement with the powerful world of fashion, in one form or another. The combination of the human fascination with fashion and potential for engagement with the natural world implicit in the use of natural fibres is a potent one. Not every human being on the planet is concerned with sustainability. However, those who are not are now in a space somewhere between concerned Westerners who can afford to contemplate the issues, and the billions of people in the developing world for whom food and fibre crops are a matter of life and death.

The revolution in attitudes to food says to me that there is a groundswell of support for natural products, and for farmers prepared to engage with consumers and their concerns about production methods. Some farmers fear the consequences of being dictated to by ignorant townies, which is a valid concern in many ways. But being engaged in debate is potentially better than be ignored by consumers who don't know and don't care, and gives producers an opening to educate about the true costs of production. The miserable state of the wider wool industry currently is an example of how competing artificial fibres can quickly come to dominate established markets given half a chance. In wool's case a divided and factional industry let go of co-ordinated promotion of the product after becoming dissatisfied with the way this was being carried out. Yet recently *Straight Furrow* ran a cryptic little article about the synthetic industry using wool as a marketing ploy for a brand launch of synthetic carpet – a stunning admission by competitors of the pulling power of natural fibres (Finnie, 2009), if wool could only pull itself together somehow. Perhaps being targeted by a government-appointed taskforce will work – or not.

The most difficult element in all of this is making returns to growers sustainable too. Linking consumers with producers is one of the best ways to highlight the issue, although generally fibre producers don't have the ability to bring their product directly to the end consumer as mentioned. But creating the dialogue is vital. Viewing merino products in retail stores, the average shopper could easily conclude that merino farmers must be doing very well indeed. If you weighed the garment and calculated the value of the raw wool bought from the farmer, however, you'd be quickly disabused of the notion that merino farming might be lucrative. The example of coffee is interesting as a point of comparison. Much column space over the last decade has been given to the trials and tribulations of coffee farmers, who receive a miniscule sliver of the money spent on a cup of coffee by the end consumer. Fairtrade coffee is now very widespread and visible, although probably not dominant in the market. Like the fibre industry, coffee growers don't generally have the ability to run a downtown café to sell their products directly to maximise their returns, but they have managed to enlist some consumer support and draw attention to their vulnerability to the big buyers who can dictate prices.



For natural fibres to be turned into textiles many highly mechanised processes are now required. Wool scours and topmaking plants, dye baths, spinning and weaving or knitting machines – each requiring millions of dollars of investment – all have to come into play before the fashion designers and retailers get anywhere near my wool. Fibre producers and textile manufacturers must work together for common goals of sustainability, because we all depend on one another. In Italy last year, considerable effort and cost was expended by manufacturers to bring producers to Terra Madre and introduce them to the processing communities there. Towns like Biella, for hundreds of years centres for textile production, are struggling for survival in the modern world too, with many factory closures and job losses being suffered. The issues of natural fibres are not simply about poor farmers being exploited by corporate processors, the problem ultimately stems from a failure so far to compete against the new manmade fibres. Competition on an economic basis is impossible, so we therefore require a new platform from which to launch our counter-revolution. Yes, natural fibre is more expensive, but it is more sustainable, more ecological, keeps millions of people in employment herding llamas or cashmere goats or growing sisal, and maintains human traditions and cultural expressions.

Natural fibre products are generally more expensive than artificially created fibres, in the same way that free range chicken with organic salad and handcut fries is a lot dearer than a bag of chicken nuggets with fries, mass produced in an enormous factory and shipped frozen to be warmed up somewhere by minimum wage schoolkids. In order for natural fibres to survive, the industry as a whole needs to target exactly those consumers who prefer to source their food at the Farmers' Market or through a CSA, who feel good about cooking 'from scratch' and eating sitting at a table with their friends and family. Our customers of the future are going to be those people who want to engage with the origins of their consumer goods, and who think about the bigger picture of sustainability, health and ethical human interactions with nature. These people are turned off by the corporatisation of food, alarmed by the vast areas of cropping monocultures, appalled at the abuses of low-paid workers and horrified by the animal welfare problems of the factory farming that produces cheap food. They are the individuals who believe that cheap food comes at a huge societal and environmental cost, and are prepared to put more of their income, often regardless of what level that is

at, towards items that sidestep the agro-industrial complex. Industrialised food is a relatively new phenomenon, but already plenty of people have decided that they don't like it, and are trying to opt out to whatever degree they can afford to do so. The blatant consumerism and waste associated with the 'fast fashion' business is beginning to attract the same kind of uneasiness so natural fibres of every type need to make sure they are tapping into the consciousness of the ethical consumer. Fibre producers should aim to build upon the foundations laid by Terra Madre and the International Year of Natural Fibres to increase momentum for a fight-back by all natural fibres against the huge inroads made by synthetic fibre over the last half century. A collective approach on a global scale by farmers of fibre and their processors, highlighting the cultural, environmental and social dimensions of the industry is called for. Farmers of good food are enjoying a renaissance of consumer interest and respect; farmers of great fibre must figure out how to engage those same consumers in an equally relevant and powerful way.



## Bibliography

Andrews, G. (2008). *The Slow Food Story*. London: Pluto Press.

Angelic Organics Learning Center. (2009). *About our farm: Angelic Organics Learning Center*. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from Angelic Organics Learning Center:  
<http://www.csalearningcenter.org/about/farm>

Barber, A., & Pellow, G. (2006). *Life cycle assessment: New Zealand merino industry - merino wool total energy use and carbon dioxide emissions*. The AgriBusiness Group, Auckland.

Bartlett, D. L., & Steele, J. B. (2008, May). *Monsanto's harvest of fear*. Retrieved November 6, 2009, from VanityFair.com:  
<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/05/monsanto200805?currentPage=1>

BBC News. (2009, February 20). *BBC News : UK : Bid to buck 'fast fashion' trend << urban clothing reveiw*. Retrieved November 5, 2009, from October Online:  
<http://octoberonline.wordpress.com/2009/02/20/bbc-news-uk-bid-to-buck-fast-fashion-trend/>

Berry, W. (2009). The pleasure of eating. In W. Berry, *Bringing it to the table: on farming and food* (pp. 227-234). Berkeley: Counterpoint.

Black, S. (2008). *Eco chic: the fashion paradox*. London: Black Dog Publishing Ltd.

Box, D. (2003, June 1). *Farmers' markets - The Ecologist*. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from The Ecologist:  
[http://www.theecologist.org/green\\_green\\_living/food\\_and\\_drink/268605/farmers\\_markets.html](http://www.theecologist.org/green_green_living/food_and_drink/268605/farmers_markets.html)

Braungart, M., & McDonough, W. (2009). *Cradle to cradle: re-making the way we make things*. London: Vintage Books.

Breckon, R. (2009, September 22). The changing face of Farmers' Markets. *Straight Furrow* , pp. 18-19.

Centre for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Sanata Cruz. (2005). *History of Community Supported Agriculture, Unit 4.1 In Teaching Direct Marketing and Small Farm Viability: Resources for Instructors*. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from Centre for agroecology & sustainable food systems, University of California, Santa Cruz:  
[http://casfs.ucsc.edu/education/instruction/tdm/download/4.1\\_CSA\\_History.pdf](http://casfs.ucsc.edu/education/instruction/tdm/download/4.1_CSA_History.pdf)

Chez Panisse. (2009). *Chez Panisse Restaurant - Chez Panisse*. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from <http://www.chezpanisse.com/about/chez-panisse/>

Chicken Out. (2009). *Home : Chicken Out*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from Chicken Out:  
<http://www.chickenout.tv>

Courtney, C. (2009, October). The growers strike back. *North and South* , pp. 58-65.

DEFRA. (2009, October 28). *Defra, UK - The environment - Business and the environment - Green products - Product roadmaps - Clothing*. Retrieved November 5, 2009, from DEFRA:  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/products/roadmaps/pdf/sustainable-clothing-action-plan.pdf>

- Encyclopedia of World Biography. (2006). *Alice Waters' biography - career, sidelights - newsmakers cumulation*. Retrieved November 1, 2009, from Encyclopedia of world biography: <http://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2006-Ra-Z/Waters-Alice.html>
- Ethicurean. (2009, October 8). *Big Meat has tantrum over Oct 15 Michael Pollan talk at CalPoly: the Ethicurean: Chew the right thing*. Retrieved October 30, 2009, from The Ethicurean: Chew the right thing: <http://www.ethicurean.com/2009/10/08/calpoly/>
- FAO. (2009). *Why natural fibres? - International Year of Natural Fibres 2009*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from International Year of Natural Fibres 2009: <http://www.naturalfibres2009.org/en/iynf/index.html>
- Fearnley-Whittingstall, H. (2004). *The River Cottage Meat Book*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Fibre Naturali (a). (2009). *Fibre Naturali - Terra Madre - Slow Food - Homepage*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from Fibre Naturali: <http://www.naturalfibres.info/page.php?id=9&nome=Homepage&lang=en>
- Fibre Naturali (b). (2009). *Fibre Naturali - Terra Madre - Slow Food - What about the future?* Retrieved November 2, 2009, from Fibre Naturali: <http://www.naturalfibres.info/page.php?idv=17&nome=WHAT%20ABOUT%20THE%20FUTURE?&lang=en>
- Finnie, S. (2009, September 22). Wool virtue recognised by synthetic carpet maker. *Straight Furrow*.
- Gowin, J. (2009). Meet your maker. *Psychology Today*, 42 (4), 51-2.
- Guthrie, J., Guthrie, A., & Lawson, R. a. (2006). *Farmers' Markets: the small business counter-revolution in food production and retailing*. Otago & Massey Universities.
- Hirshheimer, C., & Knickerbocker, P. (2006). *The San Francisco Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market cookbook: a comprehensive guide to impeccable produce plus 130 seasonal recipes*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Jamie Oliver.com (a). (2009). *Jamie Oliver - my television shows*. Retrieved November 1, 2009, from Jamie Oliver.com: <http://www.jamieoliver.com/tv/jamies-fowl-dinners>
- Jamie Oliver.com (b). (2009). *Jamie Oliver - my television shows*. Retrieved November 1, 2009, from Jamie Oliver.com: <http://www.jamieoliver.com/tv/jamie-s-ministry-of-food>
- Laudan, R. (2001). A plea for culinary modernism: why we should love new, fast, processed food. *Gastronomica*, 1 (1), 36-44.
- Local Harvest. (2009). *Community Supported Agriculture - LocalHarvest*. Retrieved October 27, 2009, from Local Harvest: real food, real farmers, real community: <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>
- LOHAS . (2008). *About LOHAS - A history of the sustainable marketplace - LOHAS*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from LOHAS: [www.lohas.com/about.html](http://www.lohas.com/about.html)
- LOHAS (b). (2008). *LOHAS International - LOHAS*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from LOHAS: <http://www.lohas.com/journal/international.html>



- LOHAS. (2009, November 3). *LOHAS: lifestyles of health and sustainability : LOHAS*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from LOHAS: [www.lohas.com](http://www.lohas.com)
- Lomborg, B. (2001). *The skeptical environmentalist: measuring the real state of the world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lucianovic, S. V. (2007, May 16). *Slow Food? Slow RUDE! - Food Media - Chow*. Retrieved October 27, 2009, from Chow - Recipes, cooking tips, seource, and stories for people who love food: <http://www.chow.com/grinder/2815>
- Mac Pac. (2009, November). Born here, shorn here, worn here. *Wilderness* , p. 15.
- McFadden, S. (2003). *The history of community supported agriculture, Part I: community farms in the 21st Century: poised for another wave of growth?* Retrieved October 31, 2009, from Rodale Institute: <http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/feature/0104/csa-history/part1.shtml>
- Menkes, S. (2008, September 21). *Is fast fashion going out of fashion? - The New York Times*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/21/style/21iht-rbasta.1.16332117.html>
- Merino Inc. (2009). *Merino Inc background*. Retrieved November 8, 2009, from Merino Inc: <http://www.merinoinc.co.nz/MerinoIncBackground.htm>
- National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association. (2009, March 19). *About Farma*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from FARMA - home of the National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association: <http://www.farma.org.uk/about-farma>
- Nicolson, D. (2009, Spring). Sustainability is farming. *National Farming Review* , p. 6.
- NZBSCD. (2006, July 13). *New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development: <http://www.shapenz.org.nz/story.asp?id=668>
- Oliver, J. (2007). *Jamie at home: cook your way to the good life*. London: Penguin Group.
- Oliver, J. (2006, September 7). *My manifesto for school dinners*. Retrieved November 1, 2009, from Jamie Oliver.com: [http://www.jamieoliver.com/media/jo\\_sd\\_manifesto.pdf?phpMyAdmin=06af156b76166043e2845ee292db12ee](http://www.jamieoliver.com/media/jo_sd_manifesto.pdf?phpMyAdmin=06af156b76166043e2845ee292db12ee)
- Organic Trade Association. (2009, February). *Organic Cotton Facts*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from Organic Trade Association: [http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/organic\\_cotton.html](http://www.ota.com/organic/mt/organic_cotton.html)
- Parkins, W., & Craig, G. (2006). *Slow Living*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- PBS. (n.d.). *on2: history of fashion*. Retrieved November 4, 2009, from PBS: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/infocus/fashion/whatisfashion.html>
- Petrini, C. (2001). *Slow Food: the case for taste*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Philpott, T. (2007, June 7). *Ruminations on food, class and Carlo Petrini - Grist*. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from Grist - a beacon in the smog: <http://www.grist.org/article/slowfood/>

- Pietrykowski, B. (2008). You are what you eat: the social economy of the Slow Food movement. In W. Dolfsma, *Consuming symbolic goods: identity and commitment, values and economics* (pp. 33-47). Oxon: Routledge.
- Pollan, M. (2008). *In defense of food: an eater's manifesto*. New York: Penguin.
- Pollan, M. (2006). *The omnivore's dilemma: a natural history of four meals*. London: Penguin.
- RiverCottage.net. (2009). *Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from RiverCottage.net: <http://www.rivercottage.net/Page~59/Hugh.aspx>
- Salmon, P. (2006). *Solution Seekers*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from ShapeNZ - NZBCSD: [http://www.shapenz.org.nz/\\_attachments/Solution%5FSeekers%2Epdf](http://www.shapenz.org.nz/_attachments/Solution%5FSeekers%2Epdf)
- Schlosser, E. (2002). *Fast food nation: the dark side of the all-american meal*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Shapiro, L. (2009, May 6). *The war on Alice Waters: food politics: gourmet.com*. Retrieved November 1, 2009, from Gourmet.com: <http://www.gourmet.com/foodpolitics/2009/05/war-on-alice-waters>
- Siegel, T. (Director). (2005). *The Real Dirt on Farmer John* [Motion Picture].
- Simply Good Food CSA Ltd. (2009). *Simply Good Food CSA Ltd - Community supported ag*. Retrieved October 27, 2009, from Simply Good Food CSA Ltd: <http://www.simplygoodfood.co.nz>
- Simply Good Food CSA Ltd. (2009). *Simply Good Food CSA Ltd - How it works*. Retrieved October 27, 2009, from Simply Good Food CSA Ltd: <http://www.simplygoodfood.co.nz>
- Skewes, Z., & Devlyn, D. (2009, October 21). *Jamie Oliver says more, please : Herald Sun*. Retrieved November 1, 2009, from Herald Sun: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/entertainment/tv/jamie-oliver-is-changing-the-world-with-his-food-revolution-all-unplanned-he-explains/story-e6frf9ho-1225789364799>
- Slow Food. (2009, October 27). *Welcome: Slow Food*. Retrieved October 28, 2009, from Slow Food Web site: [http://www.slowfood.com/welcome\\_eng.lasso](http://www.slowfood.com/welcome_eng.lasso)
- The NZ Merino Company Ltd. (2009). *Untitled Document*. Retrieved November 7, 2009, from NZ Merino: <http://www.nzmerino.co.nz/about/about.asp>
- USDA. (2009). *USDA National Agricultural Library*. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from Alternative farming systems information centre: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml>
- W, T. (2009, March 8). *It's the International Year of Natural Fibers! : San Jose : Yelp*. Retrieved November 3, 2009, from Yelp: Real people, real reviews: <http://www.yelp.com/topic/san-jose-its-the-international-year-of-natural-fibers>
- Waiheke CSA. (2009, September 23). *Waiheke CSA*. Retrieved October 27, 2009, from Waiheke CSA: <http://waihekecsa.org.nz/>
- Walsh, B. (2008, September 4). *Can Slow Food feed the world?* Retrieved October 28, 2009, from TIME: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1838757,00.html>

Wells, R. (2008, June 30). *The life cycle of fast fashion*. Retrieved October 26, 2009, from The Sydney Morning Herald Web site: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/fashion/the-life-cycle-of-fast-fashion/2008/06/30/1214677915251.html>

Whitworth, D. (2009, October 7). *Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall makes it simple at River Cottage - Time Online*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from Times Online: [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/food\\_and\\_drink/article6863257.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/food_and_drink/article6863257.ece)

Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Community-supported agriculture - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved October 31, 2009, from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community-supported\\_agriculture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community-supported_agriculture)

Witchel, A. (2009, October 6). *The food issue - Jamie Oliver puts America's diet on a diet*. Retrieved November 1, 2009, from New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/11/magazine/11Oliver-t.html>

WTO. (2009, October). *WTO : International Trade Statistics 2009*. Retrieved November 5, 2009, from World Trade Organisation: [http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/statis\\_e/its2009\\_e/its09\\_toc\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2009_e/its09_toc_e.htm)

Zque (a). (2009). *Zque: naturally different*. Retrieved November 8, 2009, from Zque: [www.zque.co.nz](http://www.zque.co.nz)

Zque (b). (2009). *Zque : accreditation*. Retrieved November 7, 2009, from Zque: <http://www.zque.co.nz/content/accreditation.php>



## **The Official Slow Food Manifesto**

**endorsed and approved in 1989 by delegates from 20 countries**

Our century, which began and has developed under the insignia of industrial civilization, first invented the machine and then took it as its life model.

We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods.

To be worthy of the name, Homo Sapiens should rid himself of speed before it reduces him to a species in danger of extinction.

A firm defence of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life.

May suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment preserve us from the contagion of the multitude who mistake frenzy for efficiency.

Our defence should begin at the table with Slow Food. Let us rediscover the flavours and savours of regional cooking and banish the degrading effects of Fast Food.

In the name of productivity, Fast Life has changed our way of being and threatens our environment and our landscapes. So Slow Food is now the only truly progressive answer.

This is what real culture is all about: developing taste rather than demeaning it. And what better way to set about this than an international exchange of experiences, knowledge, projects?

Slow Food guarantees a better future. Slow Food is an idea that needs plenty of qualified supporters who can help turn this (slow) motion into an international movement, with the little snail as its symbol.





## Natural fibres Manifesto

The “Slow Food” movement came to prominence by promoting the pleasure of food through a search of what is “good, clean and fair”, in the sphere of such a primary human need.

These essential concepts of pleasure and quality can also be applied to another vital human necessity: the one of getting dressed and expressing our own style through clothes.

Beyond the pleasure of food, also the aesthetic enjoyment and the search for a better quality of life.

The taste for beautiful and comfortable things was born in humans through a slow process, developed over centuries, combining utility, quality, culture, taste and tradition.

Observing the evolution of different forms of human expression (art, architecture, cooking, fashion...) it is quite difficult to find nowadays, the link with the original need that gave birth to them. The boost that human ingenuity gave to progress has been outstanding and, in several circumstances, has caused the loss of the narrow balance that must continue to exist between beauty, utility and ethics.

“Fast Fashion” is becoming for garments what “Fast Food” is for nutrition: it destroys differences, it flattens out the outputs and speeds consumption, killing traditions and - which is most serious indeed - killing the appreciation of the true, absolute and ethical quality.

The frenetic human progress has leaded us to face a new phenomenon, today more than ever widespread: consumerism.

Notwithstanding the acceleration of consumption in general, the production of natural textile fibres is in constant decline; these are the fibres that for centuries humans have reaped from Mother Earth to wear and are being replaced by “man made fibres”, that don't exist in nature but are instead created chemically by man (synthetic and artificial fibres).

It is not possible to stop human progress, and therefore, it is not possible to eliminate consumerism. However, it's possible to change the direction of such progress, bringing together aesthetics, ethics and quality of life trough the conscious consumption of products closer to their origins, and therefore able to generate emotions because in keeping with fundamental values like tradition, quality, elegance and “naturalty”. We want to promote these qualities, which seem to have lost their meaning in the modern world.

It is essential that men use their know-how to go back to a perfect status of harmony with nature. To consume better, in a more natural and sensitive way, will give an opportunity to an increasing number of people to enjoy quality, beauty and pleasure; as an added advantage, this would educate many, encouraging the respect of Mother Earth and of all its inhabitants.

## Plant fibres

*Plant fibres include seed hairs, such as cotton; stem (or bast) fibres, such as flax and hemp; leaf fibres, such as sisal; and husk fibres, such as coconut.*



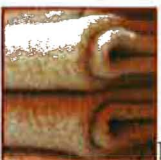
**Abaca** - Once a favoured source of rope, abaca shows promise as an energy-saving replacement for glass fibres in automobiles



**Coir** - A coarse, short fibre extracted from the outer shell of coconuts, coir is found in ropes, mattresses, brushes, geotextiles and automobile seats



**Cotton** - Pure cellulose, cotton is the world's most widely used natural fibre and still the undisputed "king" of the global textiles industry



**Flax** - One of nature's strongest vegetable fibres, flax was also one of the first to be harvested, spun and woven into textiles



**Hemp** - Recent advances in the

## Animal fibres

*Animal fibres include wool, hair and secretions, such as silk.*



**Alpaca wool** - Alpaca is used to make high-end luxury fabrics, with world production estimated at around 5 000 tonnes a year



**Angora wool** - The silky white wool of the Angora rabbit is very fine and soft, and used in high quality knitwear



**Camel hair** - The best fibre is found on the Bactrian camels of Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, and baby camel hair is the finest and softest



**Cashmere** - Cashmere is exceptionally soft to the touch owing to the structure of its fibres and has great insulation properties without being bulky



"cottonization" of hemp fibre could open the door to the high quality clothing market



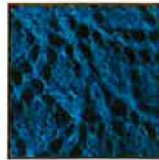
**Jute** - The strong threads made from jute fibre are used worldwide in sackcloth - and help sustain the livelihoods of millions of small farmers



**Ramie** - Ramie fibre is white, with a silky lustre, and is one of the strongest natural fibres, similar to flax in absorbency and density



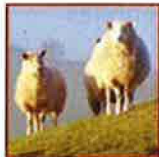
**Sisal** - Too coarse for clothing, sisal is replacing glass fibres in composite materials used to make cars and furniture



**Mohair** - White, very fine and silky, mohair is noted for its softness, brightness and receptiveness to rich dyes



**Silk** - Developed in ancient China, where its use was reserved for royalty, silk remains the "queen of fabrics"



**Wool** - Limited supply and exceptional characteristics have made wool the world's premier textile fibre


(from IYNF website <http://www.naturalfibres2009.org/en/fibres/index.html> )





William Shakespeare

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."



**The Zque way.**

Zque has been developed by The New Zealand Merino Company Limited (NZM) to ensure that performance and ethics are positively addressed in relation to fibre supply. We partner with companies who are committed to making a difference, to sustainability, and adding value to all levels of the supply chain. With a passion for fresh thinking and considerable supply chain expertise, NZM applies marketing and innovation with style and flair to take Merino to the world.

If you are interested in finding out more about Zque or purchasing Zque fibre, yarn or fabrics, please contact Gretchen at NZM.

Gretchen Kane  
International Marketing Manager  
Phone +64 3 377 7990  
Mobile +64 21 613 227

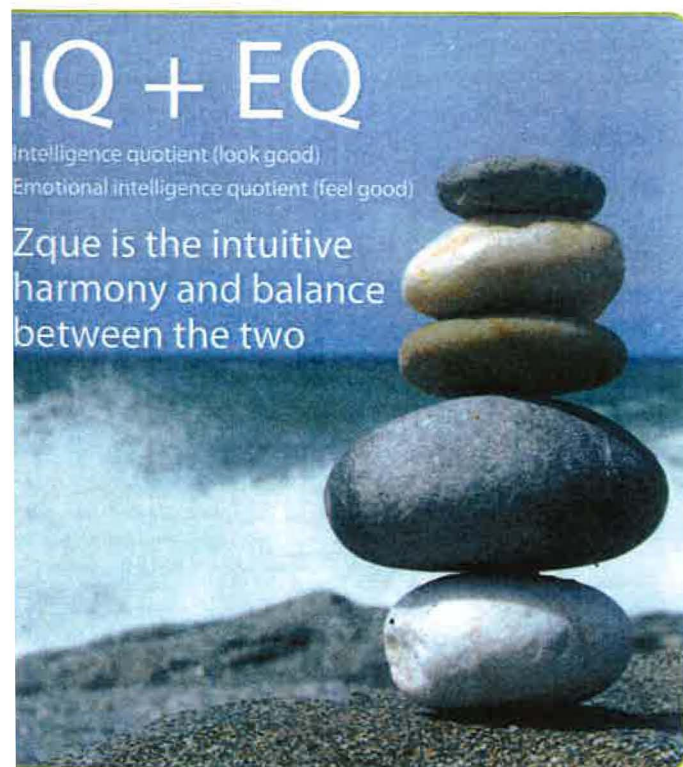
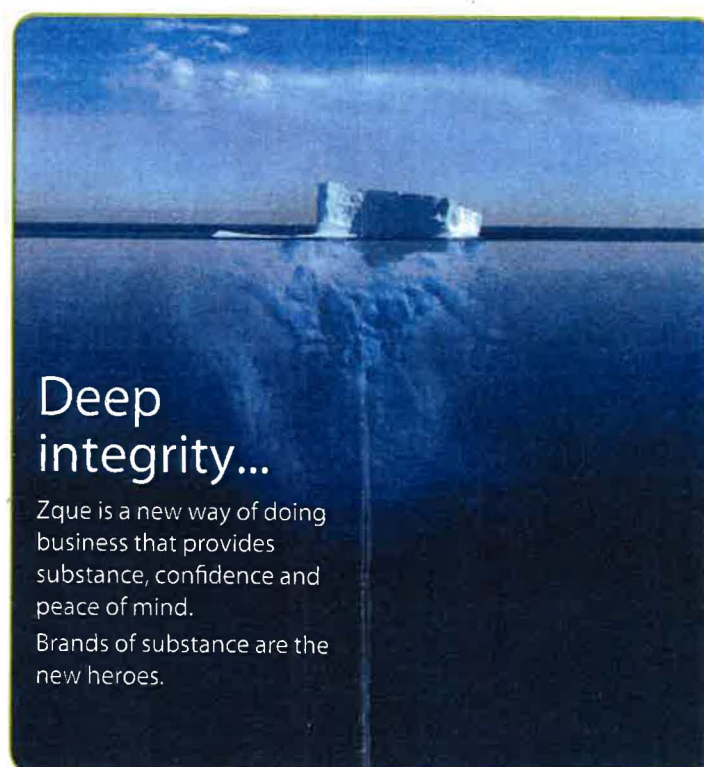
For brands of substance.

**Zque**

**IQ + EQ**

Intelligence quotient (look good)  
Emotional intelligence quotient (feel good)

Zque is the intuitive harmony and balance between the two

**Deep integrity...**

Zque is a new way of doing business that provides substance, confidence and peace of mind.

Brands of substance are the new heroes.

**...See for yourself.**

A natural and transparent connection back to the grower gives you confidence in the provenance of your garment and the specially grown fibre it is made from.

Like-minded Zque partners team up to provide traceability through every stage of the fibre value chain right back to the dedicated Zque sheep stations and families.

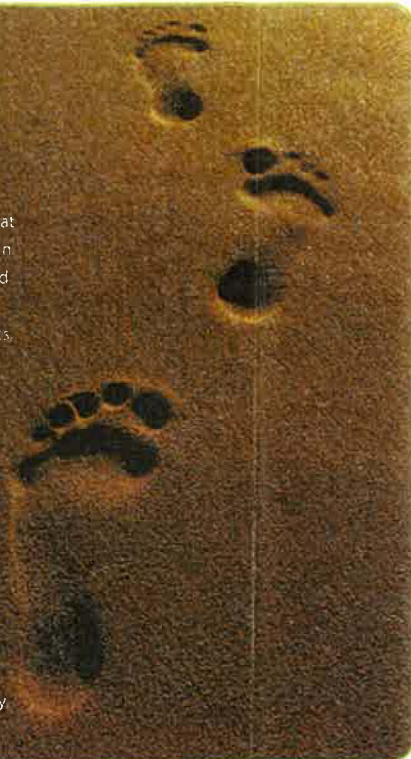


Jerry, Richard, Charlie, Emily, Corrine and Sarah Illerton are second, third and fourth generation owners of Glendene Station on the shores of Lake Taupo, New Zealand. Photo courtesy of Michael Thomas Photography



## A new way of doing business.

Zque is a way of doing business that provides retail brands confidence in their choice of fibre. Zque is backed by standards that validate performance and production ethics, ensuring we act and adapt responsibly in the future. Zque is only available through long-term partnerships and contracts with select brands. These contracts enable consistent quality of the best Merino fibre, stable prices, traceability and connectivity, and create an environment in which farming families, supply chain partners and retail brands can enhance the opportunity for business stability and sustainability.



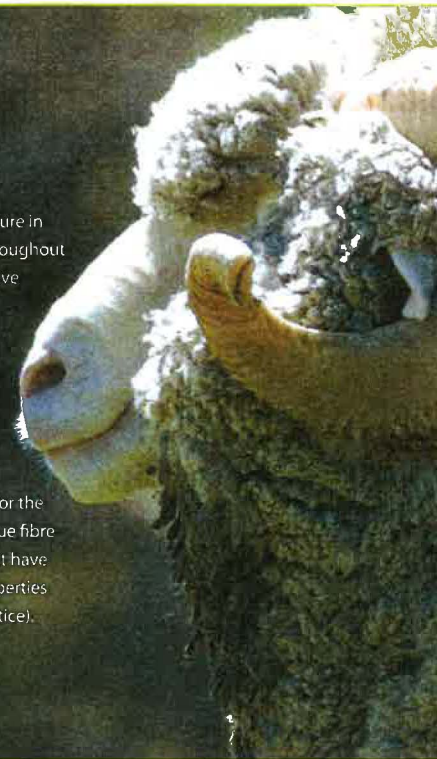
## The best fibre grown especially for you.

Not all Merino is created equal. Zque guarantees 'fit for purpose' fibre supply and an assurance that fibre meets a broad range of quality and production standards. Zque provides validation behind each performance attribute through robust R&D and market-led innovation.



## Happy healthy sheep.

Zque sheep graze on pasture in 'free range' conditions throughout the year. Zque growers have developed the necessary stockmanship and farm management systems, often over many generations, to ensure healthy animals. (Mulesing is one type of management procedure for the prevention of flystrike. Zque fibre is selected from sheep that have not been mulesed, or properties that have ceased the practice).



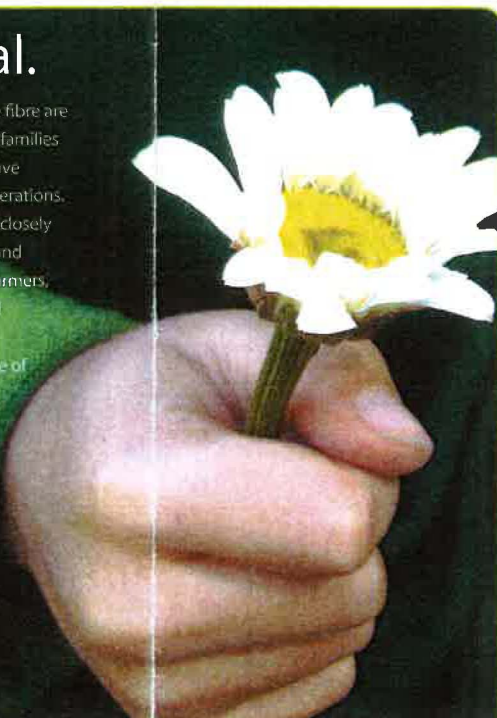
## Answerable to nature.

Healthy animals are reliant on a healthy environment, both of which are consistent with productive farming. To ensure this environment is maintained for future generations, growers have developed systems that result in premium quality fibre in harmony with environmental sustainability.



## Fair deal.

Farms producing Zque fibre are owned and farmed by families who, in many cases, have farmed for several generations. Sustainable farming is closely linked with the social and economic welfare of farmers, farm workers and local communities. Zque encourages this culture of robustness and resilience and the health and safety of those living, working and visiting Zque accredited farms.



## Rest assured.

Zque growers do not stand still. They have adopted best management practices and continually refine and improve fibre quality, animal health and welfare, environmental, economic and social sustainability. Accredited growers must meet all standards outlined in the Zque manual and must be compliant with all relevant legislation. Independent, third-party auditing is undertaken by AsureQuality ([www.asurequality.co.nz](http://www.asurequality.co.nz)), an internationally recognised auditing organisation.



# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Merino NZ Inc and Alliance Group Ltd very much for their financial support.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my referees Malcolm Douglas and Val Waldron.

I would also like to thank Simon Causer and Gretchen Kane of the New Zealand Merino Company Ltd for their help and assistance.

Thank you to Elena Schneider, Helen Cameron and the Schneider Group for taking me to Italy and Terra Madre.

Many thanks to Nicola Cummins for her suggestions, and for her painstaking proofreading of my draft.

Grateful thanks go to Michelle Wilson for her support and friendship, not to mention her infectious giggle.

Thanks to the Scott whanau for putting up with my absences, bodily and of the mind.

And my gratitude to the Grumpy Scotsman for keeping me on task, lending me his office space and the possums, watching documentary films under duress and being the dispenser of stress-relieving hugs.

